

THE HAUNTED CHAMBER.

BY ESTHER SERLE KENNETH.

CHAPTER I.

"Ellice, Bartlett Hunter is coming here."

It was Mr. Searl who spoke, and he spoke in a tone of great pleasure. He sat before the open window, his hands folded across the newspaper upon his knee, while his daughter Ellice sat at his feet.

"Who, father?" asked Ellice, carefully taking up some stitches in her light crochet work.

"Bart Hunter; you must remember him. You used to play together when you were children. That was before his uncle died and left him that splendid property. Bart's a rich man now. And, Elly, he says that he's coming back to Harford for a wife."

"Well?"

"Well, I'd like to see you Mrs. Bart Hunter. What a charming little wife you'd make, Elly!"

Ellice Searl curled her lip. I should hardly be safe in giving a reason for her doing so, — women are so incomprehensible. But, for my own part, I acknowledge to a horror of a man who makes professions of wanting a wife. Possibly Elly Searl had the same idiosyncrasy.

"Now, just imagine the whole programme," said Mr. Searl playfully. "The young cosmopolite arrives, — well, say the day after tomorrow. He comes in a glittering phaeton drawn by milk-white steeds, and all the simple rustics of Harford view him with glances of awe and admiration" —

"Father, he'll probably come in the Essex stage; and if he gets as heated as I did, the last time I went over the road from the depot, the people of Harford will have good reason to stare at him."

Mr. Hunter laughed. Ellice's inaptitude for "nonsense" was a source of great pleasure to him.

"You unpoetical little thing! — go away. I won't make any more romances for you."

"I'll make my own, father," and Ellice put up the prettiest mouth in the world to be kissed.

"And you'll marry Bart?"

"No, I won't."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want to."

"He'll make you."

"He will not."

Mr. Searl took up his newspaper. Ellice commenced counting one, two, three, — one, two, three, — as if all life was crimson crochet work. The warm breezes came into the room from the orchards and corn-fields, and the pines on the hill kept up a low, continuous murmur, which was the only sound to be heard, excepting the sheep-bells on the woodland slopes, and the hum of the insects in the grasses. Mr. Searl fell asleep over his paper; and in the warm, dreamy, oppressive silence Ellice's white lids drooped, until her pretty, golden head dropped upon her father's knee, and she, too, was sleeping soundly.

Never was there a prettier picture of December and May. Mr. Searl's massive head was supported by his hand, and the light breezes blew the tresses of his thin gray hair across his forehead. The other hand had fallen upon his knee, and against it lay Ellice's white forehead, a soft tangle of fair hair pressed under her temple, while through her parted rosy lips came her low, regular breathing. Her young, May-pink face was beautiful. And her heart was as sweet, only Elly was a bit willful. That was her only fault.

It was a great, long, low room, carpeted with India matting, the furniture of bamboo, the window drapery of snowy muslin. A carved table in the centre of the room held a Bohemian vase of white lilies, and there was a Parian pitcher of green boughs against the fireboard. The place was fresh and cool and neat, but hardly luxuriant.

I will tell you how they came to be there. It was an old house in the pretty, out-of-the-way village which Mr. Searl had thought very little about while he was the proprietor of a dozen granite blocks in New York. But after he failed, and was looking sadly about for a home, Ellice said, "Why, father, don't you remember that dear, romantic old place at Harford, with woods all about it, and ivy over all the stone-walls? Let us go

there?" So to Harford they went, — Ellice, and her father, and invalid mother, and three little brothers. Then they could not afford a companion for Mrs. Searl, and Ellice had to attend her mother. There was no school within reach, and she had to teach the boys. Her father had no comforter but her; and the house had no mistress but her; so Ellice became from a careless school-girl a person of responsibility and importance. She was only fifteen years old then; it is a wonder that the child did not become prematurely old; but Ellice did her work lightly, took no care for the morrow, while she made the best of every tangle that came in her way, and so was the sunshine and saviour of her home. To her father she was as the apple of his eye, while if anything in the world could make poor, pain-weary Mrs. Searl smile, it was Ellice's ringing laugh over a mishap. To the boys — Shep and Ben and Charlie — she was all-powerful; they believed "Sis" could do anything. And this was the pretty, slight girl of eighteen who sat asleep at her father's feet that sunny September day.

The pine trees murmured, the sheep-bells tinkled, and the insects hummed, and the afternoon wore away. The pines threw long shadows down the green hillside, and up the road came a chorus of ringing young voices. That sound, drawing nearer, awakened Ellice.

"The boys!" she exclaimed. "I do wonder what time it is!" and away she went to see if Margery was getting supper.

Mr. Searl was waking up more leisurely, when a pleasant voice, saying, "Good-afternoon, sir," started him into full possession of his faculties. A tall, fine-looking young man in a linen duster and straw hat stood before him.

"How do you do, Mr. Searl?" he asked, extending a shapely, ungloved hand.

Mr. Searl demurred.

"Bart Hunter, sir."

"Bart! — Mr. Hunter, I'm very glad — very glad to see you! Why, no wonder that I did n't know you; you've changed so in a few years."

"Ten years, Mr. Searl."

"So long as that? Can it be possible? Sit down. Where's Ellice? How did you come in, Bartlett?"

"Through the window. I was passing along the piazza to the door, but I caught sight of a lovely scene" —

"Ah, yes; I do think there are some perfect pictures about the old house. Down there, now, — across the meadow, through the arch of elms; and beyond the bend, see the river! Yes, Bart, all I've left now is this old place and Ellice. Where is she? Excuse me, and I'll go and find her; she's housekeeper and mistress here."

The young man leaned back in his chair, and tossed back the heavy masses of his hair, thus revealing a broad, white forehead, and bringing to view a pair of dark, quiet, comprehensive eyes. Hardly a handsome fellow was Bart Hunter, but he knew his value, as a man should, and bore himself very easily. He wanted a wife. Of course he did, having no one in the world to love him and to love; but one, looking at him, would hardly cheapen their estimation of wives on that account. With a forehead and eye like that he was not easily bought or sold.

Just now there was a soft light, very pleasant to see, in those dark gray eyes of his, and there was a glow on his bronzed cheek which might have been called there by his long walk in the sun, for he had traveled on foot from the depot. But light and glow were intensified, a moment later, when Ellice entered the room.

"My daughter Ellice, Mr. Hunter," said Mr. Searl with pardonable pride.

Miss Ellice was apparently not at all overcome by the presentation. She looked Bart Hunter fair in the face, and said she was pleased to meet him. She was, — she could n't help being, he was so evidently a gentleman and a fine fellow; and she knew the old, treadmill round of the house to be often dull, though she never said so. There was nothing in the world to prevent this fine fellow and dear little girl from falling into friendship, love, and marriage, but that idle remark of Bart's; he, when writing to Mr. Searl from New York, having said, "I am coming to the old country place to find a wife among the farmers' pretty daughters." But if Bart had n't written that I should n't have any story to write and be paid for.

Before tea Ellice had to make the boys presentable for the supper-table, for they had been berrying, and were scratched by briars, torn, and soiled. She was telling Sheppard where to find a rag to bind his bleeding finger, and tying Charlie's shoes, when the bell rang. She marshaled down the boys, wheeled her mother's chair to the

table, assigned Mr Hunter his seat, and took her own as quietly as if she did n't see that there was no cake on the table ("it must be gone, then"), and smell Margery's fritters burning, and stand fully aware that Bart was looking her over from head to foot. She set her pretty teeth defiantly together, and calmly poured out tea.

She did n't know by what means her father and Mr. Hunter got from the weather and the crops to the state of affairs at Washington, but, when she found them there, she ate her fritters with a sense of relief, and waited on Charlie without being distracted by her guest's eyes. Supper was over, at last, and she was alone in her room.

"I should like to know," said she, "whether I'm going to like or detest that man. I must do one or the other very soon."

My dear Elly, that is a dangerous confession to make, but it has no hearer but your own innocent self, with whom it is quite safe.

"If," said Elly, "I did n't feel as if he were taking the value of me, matrimonially, I should not mind his fixing his great eyes on me so; but, as it is, I wish he'd find something else to look at!"

She tossed back her hair, and sat down by the window, leaning out among the vines, and looking at the "lovely scene," which was Mr Searl's version of Mr. Hunter's words an hour before. The dear old gentleman was quite unconscious that the picture was himself and Ellice asleep.

Ellice went back to the time when she and Bart had played "hop scotch," and she realized for the first time that she must have been a terrible romp when she was eight years old. She remembered a quarrel they had once, when he called her a "mean little thing!" She believed she stole his marbles. The only time which she remembered of his allowing a privilege to her sex was when she flung his ball out of reach in a deep hole, because he would n't play at grace-hoops instead. Then he declared that if she "was n't a girl" he'd give her "a condemned good licking." There was no precocious sentimentality about Bart in those days. He was a regular boy.

She was a little surprised by Bart's appearance as a man. There was nothing finical about him, luxuriant as were his pos-

sessions. He was wealthy enough to have astonished the simple Harford people by a "glittering phaeton and milk-white steeds;" but here he had walked over the familiar road which he had traversed in his childhood, merely leaving at the depot a portmanteau to be brought by the stage. Bart's father had been Mr Searl's agent, and Bart had once lived in that very house.

CHAPTER II.

Ellice, like a good little housekeeper, was always up some two hours before breakfast. On descending to the hall the next morning, she found Mr. Bart Hunter marlplying fish-hooks with Ben and Sheppard.

"Say, sis," broke out Ben, in a voice which quite obliterated Bart's quiet "good-morning," "Mr. Hunter's going fishing with us."

"And," said Shep, "he knows all about the trout-streams around here, and has been down the river a hundred times, and" —

"In short, the boys have discovered a jewel, Miss Ellice," said Bart, laughing.

"I hope you will enjoy yourself," she said, with a bend of her head and her pretty smile, as she passed on to the dining-room. The next moment the bell rang.

At the table the boys were overrunning with excitement at the prospect of having Mr. Hunter for a cicerone among the ways of Harford and vicinity.

"Why, he's been down the river to the ocean, and caught tautogs," said Shep. "And he knows the way to Indian Hill through the woods. And he says" —

"Don't display all my accomplishments, Shep," interrupted Bart; "leave me a few in reserve."

"Of course Bart knows all about the haunts of the neighborhood," said Mr. Searl; "he used to live here when he was a boy. Does the old house look familiar, Bart?"

Breakfast was over, the boys had gone to the barn for their fishing tackle, and Ellice stood feeding her bird at the window, while Mr. Searl still sat at the table, and Bart paced the floor, talking, when the latter said, —

"You know the legend of this old house, I suppose?"

"No, indeed! Is there one?" said Mr. Searl.

"Oh, dear," sighed Mrs. Searl, "is there a legend to make the old dreary place any drearier and more eery? I'm sure I've listened to the wind at night blowing into those empty north rooms through the crevices, until I fancied all kinds of evil spirits about the house.

"But the legend is hardly of an evil spirit, Mrs. Searl," said Bart, smiling. "I should say the worst quality the ghost has is that of vanity. Did you ever imagine a vain ghost, Miss Ellice?"

"A feminine ghost, then," replied Ellice, laughing.

"Of course," Bart replied gravely. "It is understood that your sex monopolizes that folble of human nature. Shall I tell you the legend of the house?"

"Yes," Mr. Searl said. Ellice turned her back on the monster.

"Some twenty years ago—in your father's day it must have been, Mr. Searl—a family named Halliburton lived here. They built the house, and it was intended as the wedding dowry of their only daughter, a proud, beautiful girl. I have heard my grandfather describe her. She was tall and slender, with magnificent golden hair which reached below her waist when it was unbound, and waved and shone in wonderful luxuriance. This Margarite Halliburton was very proud of her hair. She was a spoiled child, and her natural arrogance was extreme.

"At sixteen she was sent to Paris, where she remained a year, and returned home an adept in French intrigues and fashions. While there, she had bewitched by her arts and beauty a young French nobleman, and he followed her to America. The small southwest room was her boudoir. There she used to receive him, and there he used to implore her favor; but through sheer heartlessness and caprice she jilted him, and, according to the story, he returned to Paris heart-broken, and died.

"He was the only son of a widowed mother, still young, and very handsome, and enormously wealthy. Her excitement on discovering the cause of her son's death knew no bounds. She was wild for revenge, and finally gave out word among the many suitors for her hand, that him who would carry out her plan of vengeance upon the beautiful coquette who had murdered her son, she would endow with her heart, hand, and fortune.

"There was a well-known rouse among her lovers,—a man debauched and blackened with crime, but still a courtier, and a favorite among certain ladies of Paris. He accepted the office of avenger at the lady's hands, and came to America. He sought out Margarite Halliburton, and ingratiated himself into her favor.

"A man of experience must have understood how to manage such a girl as she was. He aimed to win her love, and he succeeded. Her abandon of passion placed her entirely within his power, and he wrote to the mother of Margarite's former lover that her vengeance was accomplished, and he would soon bring her the trophy, and claim the reward.

"One day while Margarite was alone with her lover in her boudoir, the family were alarmed by a piercing shriek. They rushed to the room, and met in the hall her lover, escaping from the house with a shining length of magnificent golden hair in his hand. Astonished and bewildered as they were, he was allowed to pass them, while they entered the boudoir to find the wretched girl lying in a swoon upon the floor, her splendid hair cut close to her head. It is not probable that they understood the token of disgrace, but the miserable girl understood it too well, and probably comprehending the whole plot, she became insane, and finally died; while her lover returned to Paris with his trophy, and married the disgraceful woman whom he sought.

"But during the several weeks which Margarite Halliburton lived, she wandered back and forth from that boudoir to her chamber adjoining, looking into the mirror and combing her hair, never seeming to notice its diminished length, but repeating her lover's flattering of it. One morning she was found dead in a chair before the pier-glass. And after her death and burial her friends declared that she came back to the room, dressed as for the grave, and gazed into the mirrors of her boudoir and chamber. There! did you ever hear a prettier ghost story than that?"

"A real French story," said Mr. Searl, with a shrug of his shoulders; but Mrs. Searl groaned distressfully, and Ellice stood silent and pale by the window.

Bart's dark, bright eyes flashed a glance of dismay from one to the other.

"Mrs. Searl, have I distressed you by my foolish relation of that nonsense?" he ex-

claimed. "Miss Ellice, that laugh of yours would annihilate a whole household of ghosts and cobweb hobgoblins. Do let me hear it. You are surely not superstitious?" stopping before her, and looking with grave, re-assuring inquiry into her dilated eyes.

But Elly was very pale while she tried to laugh.

"Of course I'm not frightened by fears of ghosts; but it's such a horrible story," she said nervously.

"No more than I've heard before a hundred times," said Mr. Searl.

"But about one's own house," said Mrs. Searl. "Such a state of things to remember having occurred right over one's own head, when one lies awake at night and listens to the wind shrieking and sobbing. I'm sure it's dreadful!"

"I sincerely regret having told it," said Bart. "But please remember, Mrs. Searl, that it was as true before my narration as it is now, and you never yet saw any token of Miss Margarite's spirit."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Searl. "Elly, get your hat, and go out into the sunshine, if you are nervous."

But Elly gave her old, light laugh, at last; and taking a basket from the sideboard, she commenced gathering the napkins from the table, while the gentlemen went out, and Mrs. Searl finally fell asleep upon the lounge.

Bart and the boys had gone a fishing, and did not come home to dinner, and they did not return until night. In the long, sunny afternoon, while the house was heavily still, Ellice stole up to her room. It was the largest of the southwest chambers. Adjoining it was the small one where the boys — Ben and Sheppard — slept. Charlie was only five years old, and his crib was in his sister's room.

This small southwest chamber had been Margarite Halliburton's boudoir, then. Ellice stood in the doorway, gazing, until every perceptible inch of the apartment was engraved upon her memory. The blinds were closed, and the room was dim and cool and quiet, only that a great brilliant dragonfly, which had strayed into the window, was making slow circuits of the room, and humming monotonously. Her fanciful imagination suggested that it might be a metamorphosis of Margarite Halliburton's spirit, and she stepped back and closed the door with a nervous shudder.

Evening came. The family gathered in the long, low parlor, and the astral lamp was lighted upon the table. The boys were playing with their puzzles, and Bart was helping them or reading; and Ellice sat at her father's feet with her crimson crocheting, for she was making a scarf to be finished by little Charlie's birthday. All was cheerful and pleasant, but for some reason Ellice's thoughts kept wandering from the light, happy room to the still, dark chambers up-stairs. Bart, perhaps, noticed her gravity. He came and showed her in his book an exquisite steel engraving of the Egyptian queen, Cleopatra, lying on the cushions of her barge. She glanced at it.

"Yes, she is beautiful," she said. "See, father."

Mr. Searl bent forward.

"Yes, that's very handsome. Bart, who would not be Antony for a Cleopatra like that?"

"My Cleopatra will not come a-wooling," said Bart, with a glance at Elly's downcast lids. There was more than admiration in that glance. Elly did not see it; but she felt it, and shrank back, flushing proudly. So Bart went back to the table.

It was soon bedtime. Ellice's last thought as she lay down was that she slept in a haunted chamber, and she fell asleep to dream of Margarite Halliburton's splendid hair.

CHAPTER III.

In the night Ellice was awakened by the calling and crying of the children. She heard the sound, and found herself sitting up in bed before she realized where she was. Then she slipped to the floor, and went into her brothers' room.

They were both wide awake and very much excited, — Ben crying; but Shep, twelve years old, would not indulge in the relief of tears, though he was choking with agitation.

"Why, boys, what ails you?" asked Ellice.

"There's been a woman here in a white dress, looking in the glass," said Shep.

A deathly faintness of fear crept over Ellice. For a moment she could not speak. Then summoning an angry courage, she attempted to accuse the children of being nervous from Bart's story; but she remembered that they had not heard it. Their

wild, excited looks terrified her almost intolerably; but sitting down on the foot of the bed, and drawing her little bare feet up, half from chill and half in fear, she tried to reason the boys into the belief that they had been deceived. But they rebelled stoutly.

"You may talk all night, sis," said Shep, "but Ben and I know what we have seen! How could we both imagine that we saw the same thing?"

"You have been lying awake and frightened each other."

"No, we were both asleep," said Ben. "I heard a noise by the dressing-bureau that woke me up, and just then Shep says, 'What's that?' and woke me up too. And there we saw this woman combing her hair before the glass."

"What kind of hair?"

"Long, wavy, golden hair, — as pretty as a picture, wasn't it, Shep? and I won't sleep here any more, sis."

Poor little Ellice was at her wits' ends. It was useless to try to persuade the boys that they had been deceived, and she could only induce them to stay in their beds by leaving a light in the room, and answering them from her room as long as they chose to speak to her. But, long after they were asleep, she lay, chilled and throbbing with subtle excitement, which kept her awake and wondering until nearly daylight.

The next morning she made the boys promise that they would not tell their parents, at least for the present. How much she thought of the night's occurrence during the day one may imagine, but she was determined above all things not to let her mother be alarmed. That would institute the immediate overthrow of the household. So poor little Elly bore the secret, like a heavy burden, upon her shoulders all day. The boys, employed in outer sport, were less troubled, but Elly trembled lest a forgetfulness of theirs should involve an explanation before the social evening was through. She shrank from Bart's piercing glance at her pale face, when she bade him good-night, fearful that he would draw her secret from her.

At the boys' request she left a light burning in their room, and in spite of her anxiety she soon fell asleep, being weary.

In the night she was awaked by some one at the bedside. She started up to face Shep, trembling with excitement.

"O sis! why did n't you wake up?

We've called and called to you! Ben was afraid to get up."

"What has happened, Shep?"

"She has been here again, and I can't stand it!" and the poor boy, completely overcome by fear and excitement, broke in to a fit of passionate crying.

"Hush! hush! oh, please, Shep, don't let mother hear. Lie down here and tell me about it."

"Why, I saw her just the same as I did last night, — standing before the glass, combing her hair. Ben was n't awake, but the moment I touched him he woke up and began to cry. Then the woman slipped in here, making no more noise than a shadow, and through the door I could see her looking in your glass. I called and called to you, as loud as I dared, but you did n't answer me, and by and by, when she'd disappeared, I got up and came in here. I tell you, sis, the condemned old place is haunted!" and the boy sat upright, feverish with excitement.

Once more poor Ellice begged secrecy of the boys, and slept, that night, in their room, while they took her bed. It was a last desperate attempt to keep back the panic which she felt must soon ensue, for she could no longer reason away her credulence of the night visitor. Her father would be disturbed, her mother would go into hysterics, while the children would have their wits forever injured by Margery's Irish version of the case. Two days of excitement had made her almost ill; and as she lay down, that night, she had a fit of crying from sheer weakness and distress. She had half a mind to rise, before she fell asleep, and make her father her confidant; but she felt that whatever haunted the chambers was no chimera of the boy's fancy, and that the investigations which must ensue would betray the secret to her mother, and terrify the children beyond their strength. Then would probably come the breaking up of the household, and a removal — where? This was their only home. She must do all in her power to keep it.

The boys lay awake, talking in whisper, for a long time; but at last they fell asleep, and Ellice slept too.

She was awakened in the night by the stealthy calling of the boys. She sat up in bed, putting back her hair, and looked wildly about. The room was quiet and orderly: there was nothing to be seen.

"Children, children, you are dreaming,"

she said. She slipped from the bed, and went in to the boys. "What did you see?"

"The very same," said Shep. "I had n't been asleep at all. She came in here, with her curly, shining hair all hanging about her, and laid down on the lounge. Then she got up, after a minute, and sat down in that chair before the glass. She had a comb in her hand, I think. I tried to call you, but I was so choked and frightened that I could n't get out a word. I was afraid she would come to bed. At last she went into the other room. I called you, then. I hoped you would wake up, and see her, but I had to call a dozen times before you answered."

Ellice sat down on the bedside, and burst into a fit of crying. Instantly the boys proffered offers of eternal secrecy.

"Don't, sis! we'll do anything if you won't cry."

"Let's tell father. He won't tell mother," said Ben.

"Let's tell Mr. Hunter!" said Shep.

Ellice looked up. She had never thought of that.

"Tomorrow, boys, I will. Lie down, and go to sleep again. Nothing can hurt us. Tomorrow I'll tell Mr. Hunter."

The thought was the greatest relief. With Bart Hunter as her ally, she was a host against the intruder. He would penetrate the mystery, somehow, she was sure; and, taking heart that all would yet be well, she fell asleep, and slept late into the next morning.

Three such days and nights had their effect on poor Elly. The pink paled on her cheek, her laugh died away faintly, and the contraction of her smooth forehead was new and strange. She started at every sound, and was silent and abstracted. Only Bart could see that she put on an assumed gaiety before her parents. In the afternoon he came and sat down beside her, as she sat by the window, looking absently at the fields of corn waving their purplish plumes.

"Are you ill, Miss Elly?"

"Thank you, no. But, Mr. Hunter, I want to see you alone for a moment," she said, in a low voice. "Come out upon the piazza, please."

With a glance at her father, half asleep over his newspaper, she stepped through the window upon the piazza, and with her hand on Bart's arm, she paced back and

forth before the window, telling her story in a low, eager, suppressed tone. She related the painful experience of the last three nights, — her parched lips, pale cheeks, and anxious eyes telling most eloquently how she had suffered. Bart Hunter wanted to catch her up in his arms and kiss her for a little heroine, but he only said, —

"You have been very brave, Miss Elly. Now what can I do for you?"

"Keep my secret, and investigate this matter. I would n't have my mother know it for the world! Mr. Hunter, will you help me? I will do anything in the world for you if you will help me now."

"Elly."

"Well?"

"You said 'anything.'"

"Well, I mean it!" she answered, desperately. Of course she knew that she was talking to a gentleman. She met Bart's eyes, and demurred, however.

"Will you marry me?"

It takes precious little time to find out a great deal sometimes. Before Elly replied, she felt that she loved Bart Hunter dearly: she also remembered the words which stigmatized him to her so fatally. But she answered in a moment, throwing back her proud lit head.

"I thought you were generous" — she began.

"I hope that I am. I do not wish to buy your love, Elly, but I love you."

"Well," she said nervously, trying to keep back a burning blush, "we will leave out the conditions, if you please. Will you help me?"

"Certainly."

"How?"

"Tonight let me sleep in the boys' room; and let them have my chamber across the hall."

"Very well. And if you see the — the" —

"Pretty ghost? She shall leave me some token to show that we have met."

Ellice looked at him gravely.

"Do you think this is child's play, Mr. Hunter?"

He shook his head.

"No; I think you have reason to be disturbed."

"You do not appear to be."

"Appearances deceive, sometimes."

The strong, frank face; the deep, assuring voice, — Ellice felt her weight of care slowly lifting from her heart, and life, and some-

thing sweeter than gratitude, for the helper stirring within her. She turned away hastily, exalted but half frightened, and went in and sat down at her father's feet.

CHAPTER IV.

She went to her room, that night, and, standing before the mirror, commenced threading out her hair and looking thoughtfully at her face. Graver, sweeter, and deeper were the eyes, slower but infinitely more tender was the smile.

"I do love him, — I do," she was saying dreamily. Suddenly there came a knock on the door of the boys' room.

"Come!" she said, before she remembered that Shep was not the occupant, but Mr. Hunter. He opened the door, and gave one glance at her.

"Please lock this door on your side," he said. "But first lock the door which leads into the hall, and put the key under your pillow."

"I will."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

After he had closed the door, Bart stood a moment, with his hand to his forehead, his eyes bent on the carpet.

"By Jupiter!" he said suddenly, "I believe I have the clew!"

He walked the floor for a few moments, then broke into a low laugh, and, turning down the flame of the lamp, he laid down upon the bed, dressed.

Ellice awoke from an unbroken, refreshing sleep, the next morning. She lay, remembering the occurrences of the night, for a moment, then sprang up, dressed eagerly, and went down-stairs. In the hall she met Bart, long since down.

"Mr Hunter, did you?" — she commenced.

"Yes," he replied, with equal intelligibility. "I will tell you the whole story at the breakfast-table."

"But, Mr. Hunter," —

"You gave the matter into my hands. Let me manage it as I will."

"But my mother?"

"The denouement will have the healthiest effect in the world."

"Then you have discovered the secret?"

"I have unraveled the whole mystery, as I knew I should before I went to bed last night."

"Ellice went slowly on to the breakfast-room, trembling, yet trusting. The boys were already in the dining-room, and the family sat down at the table.

When Bart commenced to tell the first part of the story, the boys looked from him to Ellice, and from Ellice to their mother, in consternation. But no one interrupted him. Finally he commenced the narration of his own experience: —

"I lay awake for an hour, — heard the clocks strike eleven and twelve. Then, hearing a slight noise, I became more wide awake than ever. I listened to every sound, and soon heard a light footstep. I could plainly hear it walking back and forth, not far distant. Finally I heard a click, and the door of Ellice's chamber opened!"

"She always went through the two rooms" broke in Shep breathlessly.

"I raised myself quietly on my elbow. There stood the slender figure in white which I have heard described. It advanced to the mirror, and commenced combing the mass of wavy, golden hair which hung over its shoulders. Beautiful hair! I have a lock of it."

A cry of astonishment arose.

"Be patient. I am nearly through. The figure combed its hair for a while, winding some of the tresses into curls. Suddenly laying down the comb, it turned, and, coming toward the bed, sat down at the bedside, and leaning its head upon its hand, sat there quietly for nearly half an hour. I saw the face quite plainly, there being a light in the room."

"How did it look?" asked Ellice.

"A very sweet face. Hardly such a one as I should imagine the heartless Margaret Halliburton would wear. No wildness or pain in it, — perfectly quiet and calm. The beautiful head gradually sank upon the bed, the arm extended under it, and for half an hour longer I lay and watched it."

It would be hardly possible to find as bewildered and astonished a set of faces as surrounded the narrator at this period. He went on quietly: —

"Observing on the hand of the extended arm a gold finger-ring, I slowly and gently slipped it off. Then taking from my pocket a penknife, I severed one of the beautiful golden curls. I acknowledge that there was no necessity for doing this last, but I felt a great desire to possess a lock of the wonderful hair. See," producing a fair,

shining curl; "is n't the hair of Margarite Halliburton equal to all rumors of it?"

"But you are hoaxing us!" exclaimed Mr. Searl, glancing at the curl which the others were eagerly examining.

"Upon my honor the hair came from the head of the figure which visited me last night."

"Well, what became of it?" cried Ben.

"Finally, it rose suddenly, glided silently across the carpet, and disappeared in Ellice's room. Scruples of delicacy prevented my following it any farther."

"Zounds!" exclaimed Mr. Searl. Mrs. Searl began to show signs of hysterics. Ellice looked distressed; and the boys stoutly declared themselves disappointed.

"We thought you would find out what it meant!" cried Shep. "Sis would n't have minded your coming into her room if you had followed it, and found out where it went to."

"Possibly not—since she came into my room."

"Who?"

"Ellice."

Mr. Searl looked at Bart; Mrs. Searl looked at her daughter; Ellice flushed indignantly; the boys were breathless in the pause.

Bart took the curl of hair, and laid it against Ellice's loose, golden curls. It was of the very hue and texture. He produced the ring. It was a little ring of opal which she had worn upon her hand since childhood.

"But what does it mean?" exclaimed Shep.

"Simply, that your sister is a somnambulist, my boy."

Ben had to have the word explained to him.

"And was it sis who went wandering

about the rooms in her sleep, scaring us most to death?" he asked.

Bart nodded.

"And the ghostly white dress was nothing but her—night-dress?" murmured Mrs. Searl.

Bart nodded again. Looking up, he met Ellice's eyes. Her face crimsoned, and then paled with shame. She rose to her feet, ready to have a violent cry all alone by herself, but her father caught her in his arms.

"Elly, Elly! this is pretty work," he said.

But Ellice escaped from all the eyes upon her, and fled from the room.

Then the matter had to be talked over. It was two hours before Bart was at liberty to follow his own inclinations. His own inclinations led him to the oriel window in the upper hall, which he had somehow found was Ellice's retreat.

She looked up at him almost angrily as he made his appearance.

"Elly," he said reproachfully. Her lip quivered.

"Promise not to laugh at me, then," she said.

"I never will."

He knelt down and took the little, drooping head upon his shoulder.

"Will you wear the little opal ring as a token of my love?" he asked. "Or shall I get you another?"

She put out her hand, and he put on the ring which he had taken from thence the night before.

"You love me?"

"Yes."

"And you will marry me, Elly?"

"Yes."

And so Bart Hunter found his wife; and so was laid the ghost of the haunted chamber.

THE LAST OF THE MAGICIANS.

BY WILLIAM HUBER, JR.

One day, while strolling along in one of his rural walks in the suburbs of the city of Harlaem, Laurentius, sometimes called "Coster," from his office in the cathedral at Haerlem, stepped out of his path, and engraved some letters on the rind of a beech-tree. Then, cutting a square of bark from the tree, he folded it in a piece of paper, and returned home.

The little incident was soon forgotten, when, one day, Laurentius, casting his eyes upon the cover in which he had wrapped the beech-rind, perceived that the cut edges of the letters had stained the outlines of a word upon the paper. That word was "light;" the talisman that led to a mighty discovery, — the open sesame of an infinite store-room of thought and of intelligence.

Thus, ran the tale, — for it is an old one, — thus was printing invented.

But not to Haerlem only, but to Mentz, and to Strasburg, has been assigned the honor of this discovery. Very earnest at one time was the controversy, and each locality had certain pretensions to enforce.

Laurentius has the prior claim. From the rude hints he had now obtained, he perfected a sort of press, or rather wooden stamp, on which he cut his letters. He impressed one side of his sheets only, pasting the unlettered surfaces together to render their appearance more slightly. The earliest of his essays was long considered to be a

work entitled "*Speculum Nostrae Salutis*." Subsequently, however, a book was discovered, supposed to be the first specimen of printing. It was an Horarium, impressed on parchment, of eight pages only, containing the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and three other prayers. It was the rudest thing in the world, — such as the first specimen in a new discovery might indicate, — as primitive almost as the first steam-engine. It had no numbers to the leaves, no distinctive marks or points; the lines were uneven, and of various lengths, — nay, the very shape of the pages differed, some being rhomboidal, some square, some angular. This might be about A. D. 1430.

Previous to this era, wood engraving, a sister art, had been invented. In connection with it, a curious circumstance has come to light.

The earliest supposed specimen, bearing date A. D. 1423, was a representation of St. Christopher carrying the infant Jesus. However, about the year 1846, an ancient print was discovered at Malines, on the lid of an old chest, of a religious subject, dated A. D. 1418. It was purchased for twenty pounds by the conservator of the Royal Library, in Brussels, and is a far more curious and better finished specimen than that of St. Christopher, which was once, we believe, in the possession of Earl Spenser.

Playing cards are said to be of an earlier

date. First painted, they were supposed to be printed toward the end of the fourteenth century. Hence sprang the engraving of the images of saints on wood.

Haerlem was not long permitted to boast the undisputed possession of so valuable an art as printing. The invention, in spite of all attempts to conceal its nature, was pirated. It is generally supposed that a workman of Laurentius fled to Strasburg. At all events, Gensfleisch, alleged to be the elder brother of Gutenberg, set up a printing-machine in connection with the latter in this town. This undertaking, however, appears to have been fruitless, — nay, utterly failed, — for there is no proof of any book being printed at Strasburg till after A. D. 1462, the date of the general dispersion of the printers.

Gutenberg shortly afterward made his appearance at Mentz. This city was undoubtedly the scene of that improvement in the art which amounted to a second invention, and endued it with a vitality which may be said to have rendered it immortal. It was the application of movable metal types, instead of the old fixed, wooden ones, — an improvement still further enhanced by the use of cast instead of cut letters; and here for the first time appears on the scene John Fust, or Faust.

Faust, or Fust, is a name memorable alike in truth or fable. Marlow and Goethe, in undying verse, have immortalized their hero; but the Faust of history is no less famous, and stands forth in connection with the superstition and fears of an age that saw in his perfection of a wonderful art something ominous of an alliance with the Enemy of Mankind.

With John Gutenberg did Faust, an eminent and enterprising citizen of Mentz, associate himself as partner in the first printing-press, while his own energies and pecuniary resources, combined with the skill and practical knowledge of his coadjutor, soon gave that significance to the discovery that immediately rendered it famous throughout the world. Wonderful as was the power of thought, it might be said to have now acquired an omnipresent and all-pervading vitality. Hitherto, the discoveries of science and the experience of the profoundest minds were but indented upon sand, which every deluge of barbarism was certain to efface; now a security was given to man, a sort of ark which should securely

float down the tide of time to the remotest ages, not only preserving within it all that was most precious in intellectual acquisition, but containing a talisman which should stay, or at least divide, the stormiest waters, so that the good and the true should henceforth pass dry-shod and unharmed among them.

John Faust, citizen of Mentz, having amassed considerable wealth by commercial pursuits, became stimulated by a nobler ambition than that of mere acquisition, and was desirous of devoting his fortune and his energies to some system, which, though it might benefit him in a pecuniary view, should also conduce to the intellectual and physical advantages of his fellow-men. Long, however, did he muse in his search for an efficient mode of carrying his project into effect.

One evening, as the shades of twilight were descending, and he sat alone, deeply absorbed in thought, upon looking up, he beheld a tall, dark form before him. There was an ominous light in the eyes and a wild intelligence on the dusky brow of the stranger; but on his sunken cheeks were care and unrequited toil and famine.

With scarcely a word of apology for his intrusion, with some muttered exclamation that he had at length found the man he had long been in quest of, Gutenberg — for he it was — unfolded a small packet, and spread upon the table some pieces of metal. Faust looked, rather than asked, for an explanation. The stranger placed the dies in a kind of stamp, painted the surfaces of the letters — for such they were — with a dark fluid, produced a piece of vellum, and impressed upon it a short sentence. He repeated the operation several times, on each occasion comparing the results. He then displayed a printed page, — nay, several printed pages, identical in form, words, and points, such as no scribe could imitate or repeat, such as only could be perfected by some new and wonderful art, or by magic. When Faust had sufficiently admired the production, he exclaimed “that such a beautiful invention must bring its own reward, and that its authors must speedily become independent of the wealthy and the great.”

The stranger made no reply. He took a small lamp from his vest, of a construction that seemed to combine the excellence of all the latest improvements. He touched

the wick with a match. It lighted up, streaming through the apartment, now darkened by the shades of evening, then instantly went out.

"It wants oil: it has none," said Faust.

"Behold the lamp!" replied Gutenberg, again spreading the metal types before Faust. "It wants oil: will you supply it?" "I will."

That lamp had the power of infinite multiplication. From a little star, it became to the world a sun; it pierced through the thickest clouds of moral and mental darkness; it was soon reflected by other lamps of more or less intensity throughout all the cities of the civilized world.

For some years Faust and Gutenberg labored together. Though not the inventors, they stamped this art with a utility that rendered it universal. It was in many senses a fearful innovation. It swept away whole centuries of conventional rights and monopolies. Soon, however, it directed itself to mightier and to loftier objects.

These were the magicians; and at one time it appeared they would have experienced the fate of all supposed confederates with the powers of darkness.

Our Faust did not shut himself up with Wagner to discourse of "dry philosophy," nor roam the world at large with Mephistopheles to indulge in luxury, or share the witches' banquet; but he had leagued himself with the unknown, mysterious Gutenberg, and that was nearly as bad. He wielded a power which shook the conventional world to its foundations.

When the first productions of the two printers came out, we are told they created a vast sensation. Men could not sufficiently admire and wonder at the new art. The most accurate scribes and the best judges of chirography were astonished at the exact similitude of each copy of an impression. They had no idea of the means—at least the greater portion of them—by which this identity of character was produced, for the operations of the printing-press were guarded and watched over with jealous and mysterious solicitude.

If Faust eschewed magic, we cannot deny but that he loved mystery. Thus, in a most splendid edition of "Tully's Offices," which issued from his establishment, he declared, in an appendix, "the book was not executed by means of ink, nor a quill, nor a brazen pen, but by a wonderfully beautiful art"

Books, and editions of books, were now published from the press at Mentz, comprising hundreds of volumes identical in every respect,—nay, even to the slightest error, or smallest typographical mark. Gradually the admiration of the public yielded to a sort of superstitious wonder; then to fear, to hate. Many, too, were personally interested in denouncing the new art. Fanaticism and ignorance set earnestly at work. The passions of an uneducated populace were speedily aroused. Neither witches nor wizards had ceased to be believed in nor persecuted, and there was in the legends of the people many a wild tale of supernatural agency.

It had been the custom of the scribes to illuminate and embellish some of the ancient manuscripts. Faust, to enhance the value of his impressions, had in some degree followed their example. He had introduced colored inks: in many of his books the red hue predominated.

This was conclusive. Little further proof was required by his enemies, for here was displayed the sign by which he had contracted his compact with the Evil One. The populace of Mentz rose in tumult. In vain he addressed the municipality: his house was invaded, his presses were destroyed, his business suspended,—nay, it is even said he was obliged for a time to shelter himself in concealment from the fury of the rioters. But truth prevailed again. The violence of the populace subsided as quickly as it had risen, and the printing-press resumed with increased vigor its operations. But Faust and Gutenberg had quarreled: they were no longer to be associates. The man of genius and the man of enterprise separated. Each betook himself to his own path. The mighty secret was divulged, and the press, the deadliest enemy of monopoly, whether scientific or political, became patent to all mankind.

Faust, in unison with other parties, issued many works from his establishment. He lived to witness many of the mighty effects of the science which he had so materially promoted. He was undoubtedly a man of energy, a master-spirit in his time, one of, if not the last of, the magicians; for the night clouds were breaking up, and the mighty revelations of new truths, as they rose, shone with the clear light of stars, and startled not with the same fears and superstitions as they did of old.

THE LITTLE WAIF.

BY DR. CHARLES H. CAMPBELL.

It was a brilliant morning, sweet and fresh, and full of early spring, with the sun shining as it seldom shines on "London town," and a little child—such a pretty child she was!—was dancing before a gaping crowd in the open air, with the mellow flecks of sunlight gleaming in and out amongst her golden curls. Her dress was tawdry, almost repulsive; her ribbons were faded past description; two of her tiny toes were peeping at the world through the soiled white-satin slippers. She was at best but a dusty, travel-stained creature; but with her blue eyes, deep and earnest,—terribly earnest just then,—her rose-tinged baby-lips, and the wistful entreaty of her expression, she was at that moment a lovely living picture.

The young student standing on the outer edge of the thin crowd thought so, as he contrasted her curiously with her owner—the dullest mortal could not have named him as her father—who, with an ancient drum before him, and pandean-pipes nestled cozily amongst the filmy folds of his neck-cloth, was performing, with energy worthy of a better cause, "*The Rakes of Mallow*."

The child danced, the beams of heaven sparkled, the idlers applauded, until at length the poor feet tired, and the large eyes grew larger and more earnest. The little one's strength was evidently flagging. Louder and wilder grew "*The Rakes of Mallow*" as the man bent forward to frown heavily upon her. With a last faint effort the child bounded from side to side: but the grace, the elasticity, was gone; and with a curse the showman stopped abruptly, motioning her with a wave of the hand to cease and ask for alms.

Wearily and with reluctance she made her rounds. As she reached the student she paused, and he dropped a shilling into the tin plate that she held out to him. Instantly the miserable little face flushed and brightened so wonderfully that the young man, impulsively laying his hand upon her shoulder, asked her why she was pleased. Glancing at him timidly first, she next turned her gaze with much meaning toward

the money. It was so much more than she had looked for.

"Perhaps he will not beat me now," she whispered, with a deep-drawn sigh of hope, sadder than any weeping.

The lookers-on broke up and vanished. The showman, slinging his drum across his shoulder, went down the street, the child following. Behind them, at some short distance, came the student, unnoticed by them, and almost without purpose, until, having passed through lanes and alleys and noisome unknown spots, he saw the dancer and her guide disappear within the precincts of a dingy-looking house.

Up and down, outside this house, he paced for many minutes, amazed at his own folly, yet unable to tear himself away. He was haunted by the child's face, by the sadness of her one remark. All the strong, artist-soul within him was awakened, and cried aloud for another glimpse at the baby Love, the infant Venus, it had just beheld. As he lingered near the door that hid her, a faint cry, checked but bitter, reached him; and in another moment he was half way up the rotten stairs—up higher still—until he found himself within the room that held his lost charm,—and her master.

In one corner she lay cowering, piteously rubbing her right shoulder; her eyes had all their exquisite azure drowned in tears. As she saw him, she at once remembered his kindness, and, springing to his side, clung closely to him.

"Save me," she gasped,—"save me!"

His hand, at sight of her distress, had been raised to strike the brute before him; but her touch restrained him. Although the young man's blood was aflame, her face subdued him.

"He has beaten me!" sobbed the child in anguish, regardless of consequences. "He has hurt me! See!"

And with infantile recklessness she tore the ragged covering from her shoulder and disclosed a bruise—now red, but that shortly would be black—disfiguring the fairness of her flesh. The student's anger increased. He was young and tender-

hearted; and, as the showman rose, muttering an evil word, and advanced toward the terrified child, he pushed him back.

"Will you sell the child?" he asked in the heat and uncertainty of the moment.

The showman drew back, surprised.

"If I get my price," he said sullenly.

"Ten pounds?"

"Make it fifteen, and she is yours," said the other, brightening.

The student hesitated. To him the sum was large. Only that morning he had received his half-year's allowance from his miser uncle, and, were he now to part with this fifteen pounds, he would leave him only his brain and his ten fingers and thirty-five pounds to live on for the next six months. And then, when he had bought the child, what should he do with her? He hesitated. The little one, quick to perceive his indecision, tightened his hold upon him, and with passionate entreaty whispered, —

"If you leave me now, he will kill me! Buy me! oh, do, do buy me!"

Her tears fell fast; her eyes would not leave his own. He counted out the money silently. Throwing an old shawl about her, she slipped her hand within his, and together they left the room.

As they stood for a moment on the outer landing, a woman came hurriedly toward them. It was evident she had been listening to all that had passed within.

"So you are going, Jocelyne?" she said.

"Well, luck be with you! Here," — holding out to the stranger a dull-gold, inexpensive locket, — "take this: it is hers. Some time she may be glad to have it."

"That is to make me a lady one day," said the child in her high treble, out of which every particle of sadness had vanished; "oh, how I wish the time was come! Good-by, Goody."

"Good-by," echoed the woman carelessly, and moved away.

Down the stairs went the student and the dancer hand in hand. At the last step the child broke into glad sweet song. "I am free, free, free!" she sang, like an escaped bird, while a thrill of ecstasy ran through her.

"She is happy, — she is full of joy," muttered the student, gazing in perplexity at the tiny transformed creature beside him; "and why? She has only been transformed from one vagrant to another, — poor little beggar!"

"Where are we going now?" asked the child gayly.

"I wish I knew," said he.

Ten years afterward, in a pretty room, more carelessly than poorly furnished, sat a man, his elbows resting on a table, his head between his hands, staring blankly at a letter that lay before him. All about him reigned artistic confusion. Here and there lay brushes and pictures half begun; on an easel near the window stood a large painting, almost completed; exquisite sketches lined the walls; a few portraits — for the most part of the same face with a different expression, or the same figure in a different attitude — lay scattered about.

The sunbeams, breaking in luxuriously on that June morning, flooded the room with light, and, flashing on the man's face, exaggerated the miserable despairing look of it. Unlike most people, when first crushed by a great sorrow, George Blackwood fully realized on the moment all that this letter meant to him. Was it really ten years ago since he rescued little Jocelyne from the showman? Ten long years? It seemed but yesterday. Again he saw before him the pretty bruised shoulder, the pale, uplifted face, the tear-dimmed eyes. He had bought her and taken her to his heart, and now he must lose her. She was his all, — his life itself, — the "very eyes" of him; yet already must he count her lost. She would go, carrying with her all the light in which he reveled, leaving him behind to endure the gloom alone.

The door opened.

"I am coming in," called out some one gayly; and then a young girl entered, — a fairy, a beauty, more exquisite than a dream, although her gown was only of blue cotton trimmed with black velvet bows, her only adornment a plain gold locket. Her hair, a rich, wavy yellow, was gathered behind into a soft knot, her luminous eyes were purple, her lips coral.

As she approached his side, the painter did not raise his head, although her steps made his pulses throb. Slowly she advanced, at a loss how to account for the absence of the usual greeting, the half-playful, wholly loving greeting.

"Why," cried she at last, "what is the matter? Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance, what aileth thee? Don Quixote, do you know that your face is as long as my arm?"

She slipped her soft white hand under his chin as she spoke, and compelled him to look at her. His gray eyes were almost stern in their sadness.

"Read that," he said, putting the letter he had been mourning over into her hand.

At first, as she read, she made no sign, and then her color rose, higher and richer; and, when at length she turned her wondering gaze upon him, he saw, with a pang the more, that into her eyes was come a marvellous gleam.

"Is it true," she murmured breathlessly, — "quite true, — not a dream or a delusion? O Don! it is impossible."

"It is true," he said, but the last faint spark of hope that he had encouraged unknown to himself died within him as he witnessed the intensity of her delight.

"True that I, the beggar-maid, the waif, am an earl's grand-daughter?" She asked the question with parted lips, and lovely, bewildered eyes. "Don, come here and pinch me. — I cannot be awake! Why, it is better than Hans Andersen, more wonderful than the 'Arabian Nights!' " Then, once more returning to the letter, she recited aloud such scraps of information as most astounded her. "'Stolen by her nurse when only two years old, through motives of revenge,' — revenge for what, I wonder? — 'and, later on, was given into the charge of the woman Grainger,' — that indeed was Goody's name! — 'had on her, at time of disappearing, a plain gold locket with initials 'J. G.' " Yes, here they are. What do they stand for, Don?"

"'Jocelyne Gresham,' your mother's maiden name."

"Poor mother! And what am I now? Lady Jocelyne, or the Hon. Jocelyne, or what?"

"The Hon. Jocelyne."

She burst into laughter; while he watched her, heart-broken.

"It is too good to be true," she said. "Do you remember how you used to call me your 'Princess in disguise'? And see, your words were a prophecy! Oh, what good times we shall have now, what long, long holidays, what glorious drives, and the opera every night! Of course I shall have plenty of money, and lots of pretty dresses and rings, and a carriage perhaps, and " —

"My poor child," he interrupted sadly, "have you been pining so much for all these things?"

"No, no, indeed!" cried she eagerly, running up to where he had drawn himself apart from her into the window. "Until now, when it dawned upon me that I might have them, I have never cared for them. But how sad you look, Don! Are you not glad that such good fortune has befallen me?"

"How can I be glad, Jocelyne, when its coming will take you from me?"

"Take me from you?" — in a changed, low tone.

"Yes: of course you will go now to live with your grandfather."

"Oh, must I do that?" she said; and her face fell, losing its joyous expression. But she did not repudiate the idea with scorn or anger; and something that was like anger against her coldness rose within him. At the moment he almost hated her.

"Do not break your heart about it," he remarked, with a suppressed sneer. "I dare say in a very little time you will adore this new relative. Think of all that lies before you, and never look back. It is a mistake."

"I suppose I shall like him very well by and by, and — and all that," said Jocelyne, still rueful; "but I shall never love him as I love you, Don, — never! After all, it is you who have been a real father to me, is it not? And such a nice, handsome young father too!" she added, with a laugh.

Each sweet, unblushing avowal stabbed him. He felt he could not bear much more of it.

"You had better run away now," he said; "I am expecting Lord Mayfair every moment. There, — was not that a knock? Now go."

"Already? Well," — with an air of decision, — "I want to see him too, so I shall remain."

"No: I wish to see him alone first. Go, Jocelyne."

He used a tone of command which she at least had never heard from him before, and she obeyed. Standing half in and half out of the doorway leading into an adjoining apartment, she spoke again hurriedly, her courage failing her at the last moment.

"If he should be cross, Don, or proud, or disagreeable in any way, you will let me stay with you? Promise me that. Quick, — I hear him!"

"You shall decide for yourself," said Blackwood coldly.

"Remember what you say. You will not coerce me in any way? If I wish to remain, you will stand by me?"

"You shall do as you will," he said again; and almost as the one door closed on her retreating figure the other opened to admit her grandfather.

He was an old man of middle height, with a gentle, weak, aristocratic face. Seeing the painter before him, he bowed.

"Mr. Blackwood, I presume?" he said; and Blackwood, coming forward, handed him a chair, and at once plunged into the dreaded subject.

The earl's story was long and tedious, the painter's short and concise. No doubt about her being the long-lost child could possibly remain. At the end the old man said huskily, —

"I cannot thank you, — no words could tell you how I feel, — yet I am here now only to do you an injury, — to rob you of the child you love! Mr. Blackwood, is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing, my lord," said the painter briefly.

"When may I see her?"

"Now, at once. She is awaiting your summons. May I ask when?" — he stopped to clear his throat — "you intend taking her away with you?"

"Today," said Lord Mayfair, with a gesture of surprise — "I thought from my letter you would understand. It will be better so. You see, sir," — speaking very gently, — "you are a young man, and she must have outgrown her childhood, and — and — and" —

"My aunt has lived with me ever since I — found Jocelyne," interrupted the painter haughtily.

"Of course, of course; I quite comprehend. Still" —

"Today?" broke out the other, with sudden passion. "Must it indeed be so soon? In one hour to tear asunder the links that years have forged! Is she to be as nothing to me now, when countless memories have united us for so long? To you, this child, with all her pretty ways, is unknown; to me — Why I bought her — made her mine, as I madly hoped, forever — does that give me no claim upon her?"

"Sir, if I might be allowed to" —

"What?" cried the young man fiercely, springing to his feet; and, then breaking into a bitter laugh, "Forgive me, my lord,"

he said; "but if you only knew all! I had her so cheap, — my poor child!"

There was such infinite yearning love and pity in his tones that Mayfair's heart, which was a tender one, bled for him.

"You shall see her now," said Blackwood gently, and, opening the door, he called "Jocelyne" twice. Then, as he heard her step approaching, he went out, and let them meet unseen.

She was gone. Already she had ceased to be part of his daily life. She had demurred a good deal to such a sudden departure, and had shed many sincere and loving tears; but she had at length consented, and the old house would know her no more. Just at the last Blackwood had said to her, "Well, Jocelyne, you see I have kept my promise; I told you you should decide for yourself." It was the only reproach he had allowed himself to utter, and he had said it smiling. But, when she was indeed gone, and the door had closed behind her, he had flung himself face downwards upon the table, and for long hours had lain there motionless as one dead.

Two years passed away, — two years of great success and utter heart-loneliness for Blackwood. During the first miserable months after Jocelyne's departure, out of his wretchedness he had conceived and sent forth into the world a picture that was destined to make him famous. The wonderful thing that for long years had been his dream by day and night had at last come true, — his name would live, — his praise was in all men's mouths; while Fortune, with her fine disregard of economy, had at the same time thrown to him yet another boon; for Death had loosed his uncle's hands from off his money-bags, and they, coming to Blackwood, had made him rich. Yet all was as nothing to him for the want of her he loved. Determinately as he had tried to live the feeling down, he still pined for the sight of two blue eyes, for the touch of Jocelyne's cool little fingers, the music of her voice.

With Jocelyne the time had been spent in idle, happy wandering. From city to city, from capital to capital, the old man had taken her, feasting her eyes on all that was fairest and most choice, — educating her in the fullest sense of the word. Admiration, love, variety, all that a woman most craves, was hers: she reigned a little queen in her own circle, both by virtue of her great beauty and the fortune that should one day

be hers; yet, on this her first morning in London, after her return home, as she unclosed her violet eyes and flung her white arms above her head in lazy wakening, her one thought was, — "Today I shall see Don."

Later on, when luncheon was over, she turned to her grandfather.

"I want to go and see Don," she said.

"Whom, my pet?"

"Don Quixote."

"Oh! Mr. Blackwood. Well, so you shall some day."

"No, not some day; today, — this very moment!"

"But, my darling, you know you promised Nugent to ride with him."

"Oh, never mind the little viscount! Too much of anything is good for nothing, and I am weary of Nugent. Let me assure myself that he can exist without seeing me for one whole day. Perhaps, if he survives, he may have something to say to-morrow that I have not already heard a thousand times."

"I wish you would be a little more civil to him, Jocelyne," said the earl coaxingly. "You know how highly I think of him; and — and he is the best match this season."

"Dear grandpapa, you forget, — have we not two princes still unwedded? I reserve myself for royalty!" declared the spoiled beauty, making an adorable little moue at her own lovely image in an opposite glass. "But about Don, — you will come with me, grandpa?"

"Of course," said he, perhaps in his heart relieved that his willful charge had not elected to go alone.

As they entered the painter's studio, Blackwood — whose thoughts had been with her all the day, but who had not dared to hope so soon for her coming — rose to receive them. He was strangely pale, and looked older than his thirty-one years. By a supreme effort he controlled himself, and succeeded in greeting them calmly, if coldly.

Was this Jocelyne, — this radiant being in trailing silks and all the pretty devices of a last fashion? How unlike the child in blue cotton! yet how like, and, alas! how much more beautiful! All at once he realized how vain had been that cruel torturing of himself; his love rose high above all claims, — he was hers for good or evil on this side of the grave.

The earl, watching him narrowly, never guessed at all this, — the man was so calm, so self-possessed, showed such a curious want of feeling, the terrible struggle within him making him curt and cold beyond his wont. Once, as Jocelyne stood somewhat apart, he asked her, —

"Are you happy?"

And she answered him, with a little smiling nod, —

"Very happy;" then prettily, "But all the more so now that I have seen you again. I felt a want before."

The sweet words warmed his frozen heart. He could not resist smiling back an answer to them, and then hated himself for having done so. She was no longer anything to him that he should feel pleasure at the kind words that probably meant so little.

"Prince Charming has not arrived yet?" he asked, prompted by the consuming fear within him.

"No, indeed; and he would be wiser not, unless he wishes a cold reception."

"How cruel of you! But some day you will think differently."

"Shall I? Why, you are as bad as grandpa!" said she, with a lovely pout. "All the morning he has been tormenting me to marry, marry, marry. Am I then so bad to look at that I must hurry my misfortune?"

"Then there is some one?" he asked carelessly, but paling a little.

"Yes. I don't mind telling you: you remember how I used to tell you everything that concerned my stupid self? It is Lord Nugent; and it vexes grandpa that I cannot bring myself to think him perfection. Not but what he is a nice boy rather; only all boy-lovers are so — so — sugary! Any other kind is preferable."

"There are others?" — he could question her only in a dull, heavy way.

"Oh, yes!" — holding up ten little pale lavender fingers, — "more than I can count, — young, old, and middle-aged! I think I like the old ones best, they are so good-natured, and give one such pretty presents. And the fun of it is" — laughing — "grandpa lets me take anything from them, though I must take only flowers and boubons and that from the boys" —

"Jocelyne, I fear we must be going," broke in the earl, coming lingeringly back to her. He was a connoisseur of pictures, and had been engrossed by one all this time.

After this, Blackwood saw a good deal of Jocelyne. She would run in and out between three and six during the long spring evenings, generally accompanied by her duenna, a pleasant-faced old lady of about sixty, and once or twice, for a few moments, alone; and each day the struggle to conceal his love from her grew fiercer. She would tell him all her merry secrets, and her few troubles, — how she had finally rejected Nugent, and thereby very much angered her grandfather; not that her grandfather was ever really angry with her, — so it did not greatly matter: now there was some one else on the *tapis*, but him she liked just as little: and so on.

All this innocent prattle tortured the jealous heart that listened. Blackwood was haunted by the fear of a day that might — nay, must — come, when she would come in there, and, with sweet, shy blushes, tell him how at last her choice was made, her young love given, and then — He would put a stop to it. She should come there no more. Death at once was to be chosen before this daily dying.

One day, as he was in this mood, she ran in alone.

"I have just five minutes," she said, "and then I am due at Lady Brand's. I never saw any one look so ill as you, Don! What are you doing with yourself? Give up that nasty painting for just this one day, and come with us to Lady Brand's; she takes it quite to heart that you never go there now."

"I am particularly busy today, so you must excuse me; and, besides, I cannot say I greatly care to associate with the silly set of people she chooses to gather around her."

"Oh! Am I a silly person, Don? No," — holding up a warning finger, — "don't say it. I can see by your eyes you have something withering at the very tip of your tongue. Oh, what a glorious day it is! — but too warm!"

She tilted her cream-colored hat a little backwards, so that it sat on her head sideways, and added the charm of innocent coquetry to her appearance. Her very beauty irritated him.

"Put your hat straight," he said unkindly.

"Is it unbecoming?" asked Jocelyne. She went over to a mirror, and put her hat back into its proper position; then she

came to his side. "What is it? How have I vexed you? Do you not then love me any more?" She asked all these questions in the pretty, soft, beseeching voice she might have used five years before.

The painter gazed up steadily into her face; she was bending slightly over him. A minute that was a lifetime passed so, and then he conquered. No: she should never know how madly he loved her.

"What a little coquette you are!" he exclaimed, with a cold smile.

"Now I shall tell you all about last night," she said, settling herself cozily into an arm-chair. "I can assure you you lost by not being there. I was never at so good a ball, — and never enjoyed myself so much."

"Which means that you made several new conquests, and sent one or more men home broken-hearted. That is the keenest enjoyment a young lady of the present day knows."

"Don't bite your mustache quite through, Don," said Jocelyne, as yet undismayed; "the only merit a fair mustache can claim is its length. Yes, — I certainly did make a conquest last night; but I didn't get the chance of refusing any one, — so you are wrong there."

"Another! Why, you are a perfect warrior!" he exclaimed bitterly. "An Indian with his belt full of scalps would be a mere trifier in the battle-field compared with you! May I ask the name of your latest victim?"

"No, you may not. I don't care about conversing with ill-tempered people," said Jocelyne, rising with much dignity. "Because your cook, or your man, or your chosen friend, has annoyed you is no reason why you should vent your suppressed rage upon me. I shall come here no more. Perhaps that will please you."

"Yes, it will," retorted Blackwood, rising too, and growing very pale; "nothing will please me better. You disturb me and waste my time with your frivolous tales of lovers unworthy to bear the name. Go, and do not return: it will be better for us both. Forgive me if I am rude; only — go."

"You need not say it again," said Jocelyne, who was looking almost tall, and very proud, and whose eyes were filled with tears.

She made me a little dignified courtesy, and left the room, — forever, as he thought: she could scarcely forgive the grossness of

his behaviour. So he fell into despair, and could neither eat nor sleep.

Nevertheless, at four o'clock the very next day, there came a low knock at his door.

"Come in," said he wearily.

The door was opened partially, but the visitor—*whoever it was*—apparently had some doubts about the propriety of entering.

"Come in,"— impatiently.

"Oh, but I'm afraid!" murmured a voice that made Don spring from his chair. Only just now he had been thinking he should never see her again!

"Is it you, Jocelyne?" he cried eagerly, going to the door, and drawing her in by both hands.

"Yes," demurely; then—with a pretended glance of amazement from under her long lashes—"and positively I do believe you are glad to see me!"

"Glad!"

"Well, so you should be after your scandalous conduct of yesterday. You were very near never having that pleasure again. Why, Don, how worn you look! Have you really been repenting in sackcloth and ashes for your sins against me?"

"I have neither eaten nor slept," he said. I thought you would not forgive, and you have overlooked my fault so soon."

"Yes, I know I am sadly wanting in proper feeling. But"—severely—"to starve yourself—how extremely wrong of you! You shall have something to eat this very moment. I saw the luncheon laid as I came in. No, don't ring: I will attend to you myself. and scold you all the time."

She rustled out of the room in her pretty, vivacious way, without giving him leisure to protest; so that he was constrained to follow her. When in the luncheon room, she hovered round him, pouring him out some wine,—*cutting the bread even*,—while he, looking on, had not the courage to interfere, so exquisite was the pleasure it gave him to see her do it. He tried to eat, but failed. When he had drunk a glass of wine, he rose.

"I cannot eat," he said, with a smile. "You have sufficed me. Now will you tell me all I refused to hear yesterday? There was some one new"—

"No, I was only joking. But I am in fresh trouble. Lord Blunden—you remember, I met him two months ago—spoke to grandpa yesterday, and told him I was the

light of his eyes, and all the rest of it; and grandpa thinks I should listen to him. Do you know the man, Don?"

"Yes: he is a dark, handsome man. I know him very well."

"And don't like him? Well, neither do I; so we won't waste any more time talking about him. What I really came for today was to tell you I am going down to Ivors tomorrow, and to make you promise to come to my birthday ball next month."

"But, my dear child, it is so long"—

"I don't care how long it is. I don't care if it is a hundred years since you were last at a ball. I intend you shall come to mine. Now—do you hear?—I insist. You owe me some reparation, so you can't refuse. Good-by, Don,—I must run away; but say 'Yes' before I go."

"Yes," he said, unable to resist.

In Jocelyne's pretty boudoir that night high argument was being held. Lord Mayfair, hot and irritated, was standing opposite his grand-daughter, with uplifted finger, making a vain effort to induce her to listen to reason; while she, in her pale green ball-dress and water-lilies, and with her lips and eyes alike *incontinuous*, was plainly and shamefully rebellious.

"I confess I cannot understand you," said the earl plaintively. "Last week you showed yourself thoroughly gracious to him, and tonight you would not spare him even one dance. It is—it must be—mere caprice. He complained to me bitterly about it."

"I hate tell-tales," returned Jocelyne, frowning. "Is he afraid of me, that he must employ a go-between? Last week I looked upon him merely as a friend, and could afford to be civil. He has put it out of my power to do so any longer."

"Now what objection can you possibly have to Blunden?" asked her grandfather, in despair. "You refused Nugent because, you said, his nose was not in the middle of his face,—an absurd remark, that could be applied to any one. But Blunden is acknowledged by all to be a remarkably handsome fellow,—the handsomest in town."

"He is n't half so handsome as Don," replied Jocelyne provokingly.

The earl turned upon her angrily.

"It is always Don," he said. "I am sick of the name. One would think it was Mr. Blackwood you wanted to marry."

There was a dead silence. A cold hand

seemed to have suddenly clutched at the girl's heart. Those few idle words had done for her what two long years had failed to do. She stood for a full minute as if turned to stone. Did she love him? Slowly her color faded until cheeks and brow and lips were white as snow. Then she turned and sought her own room. Throwing herself, dressed as she was, upon her bed, she fought a long battle with her heart through all that night season, until, as the morning dawned, she knew.

The next day she left London and went down to Ivors without seeing Blackwood again, to spend each quiet hour in troubled thought. She was now assured of her own feelings; but could she answer for him? He was always so cold, so indifferent, — no little word that she could remember had ever escaped him; and yet — She alternated between fear and hope; one moment possessed with doubt, the next sustained by some fitful, rapturous gleam of certainty.

As the morning of her birthday broke to let the many gifts from every side pour in, and no mark, no token of affection, came from him, her hopes fell dead. And when at night she stood, robed in white satin, beside her grandfather to receive her guests, there was a sickening dread within her that at the last the one she loved might fail in coming; so that, when he did come, she could greet him only with lips as white as her gown, and a smile so faint as to be almost imperceptible.

He noticed it, and wondered at the change, and grew uneasy about it. When she danced with him she was silent; the gay, debonair child was gone, leaving a silent, absent girl in her place. As the night wore on, and, watching her, he noticed that with others she was almost her own gay self again, — that with him alone she was different, — there grew upon him a determination to know the worst.

He found her standing by the open door of the conservatory, alone, gazing into the quiet night.

"How cool it looks out there!" she said as he approached.

"Will you come and see how cool?" he asked; and, as she acquiesced, he put a shawl round her, and together they went down the steps into the garden beneath.

In silence they walked down gravelled paths, past sleeping flowers, under the lonely, sighing trees, until, having left behind

them all frequented spots, they emerged suddenly upon the borders of the lake, over which the white moon had flung a silver veil.

Jocelyne had never spoken since they left the house; and now, standing beside the water, she had thrown back from her throat, and arms the blue shawl, as though unable to endure even so much covering. Her thoughts — where were they? Blackwood hardly dared to speak. Was this strange pain at his heart the presentiment of coming evil? He gazed at the stars studding the mighty dome above him, and at last could bear the silence no longer.

"Jocelyne, what is it?" he said.

She glanced at him with half-frightened, half-inquiring eyes, but made no reply.

"There is something wrong. Nay, child, you cannot deceive me: tell me what it is. Where is all the gayety, the brightness, that should be yours, — and this your birthday too? Tell me, what troubles you?"

Still she made him no answer; only turned her little white throat restlessly from side to side, as though seeking escape.

"Is it about Lord Blunden?" he asked in a choked voice.

"Yes," she said, catching eagerly at the suggestion, though Blunden was never farther from her thoughts. "You know he came down early this morning, and after dinner he was foolish enough — Of course I refused him; and now they will all be angry, and say I have again done unwisely. It is always the same; and yet what do they want? Am I to marry to please them or to please myself?" She finished a little wrathfully, through her agitation.

There was a long pause. Some tiny, foolish songster, mistaking the brilliant moon for a faded sun, broke into a joyous melody, but, discovering his error, quickly subsided into a sleepy trill, and then once more into silence. The sorrowful lap of the wavelets alone disturbed the calm.

"Jocelyne," Blackwood said in a low tone, "why is it always the same? Is it — is it because you love another?"

"Yes," answered the girl faintly.

It was come at last. He almost staggered as the trembling word reached his ear. Then an overmastering desire to know the name of him who had gained his all took possession of him. He caught her arm roughly.

"Who is it? Speak!" he exclaimed passionately.

Jocelyne burst into tears. She was already overwrought, and the sudden vehemence of his touch unbinged her.

"You — you — you!" she cried, flinging out, with a gesture that was almost reckless, her bare white arms toward him in the moonlight. For a moment she stood so, then, covering her face with her hands, she shrank away. "Ah, what have I said? What have I done?" she sobbed.

She was in his arms.

"If you are lying. I will kill you!" he said. "Say it again!" Then, in a changed tone, "My sweet, my angel, is it indeed the truth? Can it be true?"

"And you, Don?"

But, though she asked the question, she hardly heeded the answer; his look, his touch, the tender passion of his voice, being

all-convincing. He bent his face to hers; — for four long years he had not kissed her, — and now their lips met as they had never met before.

Just before they returned to the house, he put his hand beneath her chin, and, raising her face until he could gaze clearly down into the pure violet of her eyes, said, almost sadly, —

"Beloved, have you thought of everything, — all you must renounce; not wealth perhaps, but rank? you, who might have been — Think, my darling, of all you will lose."

"Nay," she answered sweetly, her red lips parting in a fond smile, her eyes gleaming darker through tears of joy, "how can I, when it is so immeasurably outweighed by all that I shall gain?"

THE OLD APPLE-TREE.

BY MARY A. ALDEN.

It stood at the end of a lane, behind a stone wall that gave it, with another stone wall, an angle in a field, where other apple-trees were growing, scattering the ground with their various-colored fruits. Some large and red, some pale pellow, some russet brown. Yet, the old apple-tree at the corner bore the best eating apples of all the trees, and was the tallest, the largest, the most picturesque of them all. It loved the children, and tossed its apples into the lane, for them to pick up, on their way from school. The owner of the apple-orchard loved the children also, and gave them all the apples in the lane, but forbade their climbing the wall.

Some naughty boys disobeyed this command, one day, and not only climbed the wall, but the tree also, filling their pockets with the beautiful, ripe fruit. They lost it all, however, in their endeavor to escape detection, scrambling out of the tree, and running down the lane at the approach of the owner of the orchard. The fruit lay temptingly in the lane to meet the eyes of little Susie Lane, who, coming late from school, feared the apples would be all gone, and accordingly rejoiced at the unexpected abundance.

"Mr. Goodman has been throwing some over to us, I guess," she said to herself as she filled her satchel, losing at the same time her apron, the strings of which had come to the front, a custom adopted by herself and playmates in token of their woman's-rights principles.

The apples filled her mamma's fruit basket, whilst her apron nestled down by the wall would have escaped her thoughts entirely if her mamma had not inquired for it.

"I must have left it at school," said Susie. "I shall find it tomorrow." And eating an apple, she sat rocking herself, promising between the mouthfuls to be more careful in future, until her mother requested her at the same time to consider her manners, and become more ladylike.

"Why I'm woman's rights," said Susie, nevertheless rocking more gently, and putting aside her apple while she related the

incidents of the day. It suddenly occurred to her as she was talking, that she had worn her apron from school, for lingering to talk with one of her little friends, she had wished that their aprons were either both blue or both pink, and had promised to wear her pink one the next day, so that they might be alike.

"It is growing late and raining," she said, looking from the window, "or I would go and look for my apron. I may have dropped it on the way."

"If you have lost it, my dear," said her mother, "you will be obliged to wear your faded brown one instead."

"That old mangy one?" said Susie, drawing a long face. "The society will disown me. I will put pink strings on to it, only I know I shall find my other."

The following day she had intended to hasten early to school to look for her lost apron. The heavy rain and stormy wind, however, rendered it impossible for her to leave the house. The lost apron cast its shadow over her holiday, and she welcomed the sunny morning that permitted her to seek the accustomed path to school.

Neither apples nor apron rewarded her studious search upon the way. The wind had blown the apples all in to the orchard, and Susie feared her apron had gone on a sky journey, and might be at the top of some of the orchard trees. During the day this thought sobered her. As the apron was not in the school-house, she determined at night to ask Mr. Goodman to allow her to look through his orchard for it, and with this purpose in view, walked slowly through the lane at night. As she approached the apple-tree, she heard voices, and noticed two boys helping Mr. Goodman pick the apples off the ground.

One of them called to her, —

"Is this yours, Susie?" holding out her apron, sadly limp and soiled, yet a glad-some sight to her.

"Oh, yes, thank you," said she, stretching out her hand for it. "Where did you find it?"

"It flew up into the larch-tree in front of

our sitting-room windows," said Mr. Goodman. "We saw it looking in at us this morning. I asked these boys to find me an owner for it."

Susie was surprised to see who the boys were. She had heard, that day at school, that these very boys had disobeyed Mr. Goodman, and not only climbed the wall but the tree, and that he was very much displeased with them.

While she was rolling up her apron, Mr. Goodman asked, —

"What have you in your satchel?"

"One book," said Susie. She had hoped to pick up an apple or two, but she did not say so.

"Wait here a few minutes," said Mr. Goodman. "I have something to send to your mother." And he walked away from them, through the orchard, toward his house.

While he was gone Susie said, —

"Have you heard the wicked stories somebody is telling about you, Sol and Sandy? I am glad it is n't true. They said at school today that you climbed this apple-tree, and picked the apples."

"Did they?" said Sol.

"They told the truth," as he paused in picking up the fruit. "And if there is a good man alive it is Mr. Goodman."

"I guess he was born with his name on," said Sol. "He talked with us ever so long," said Sandy, "till we grew so ashamed that I would rather have had a thrashing, had n't you, Sol?"

"I could n't be sorrier than I am," said Sol. "He's forgiven us, Sue, and we are helping him in his harvesting."

As he finished speaking Mr. Goodman stood beside them, holding out a basket of plums to Susie.

"Will you take these to your mother from me, and tell her that part of them are for you?"

"Thank you, yes, sir," said Susie, smiling.

"And please say to her that if she desires apples for winter use I will send her as many as she needs."

"Oh, thank you," said Susie.

"And bring me word tomorrow if she does."

Promising to do so with more thanks, Susie hastened joyfully home with her fruit offering.

"There's my apron," she said, throwing it on the table; "it's been playing bird. What a nice time it must have had whisking about in the storm."

And she explained, at some length, its adventures, whilst the purple, beautiful fruit awaited its introduction, delighting her mother's eyes as it graced her modest table.

"Part of it for me," said Susie, who having shortly repeated Mr. Goodman's promises of apples for the winter, delicately tasted a fair ripe plum.

When the spring-time brought buds and blossoms again to the old apple-tree, it brought good fortune to Sol and Sandy, who, having found a true friend in Mr. Goodman, now received from him constant and easy employment on his farm. Their parents rejoiced in their changed lives; from boisterous and rebellious they became well-mannered and industrious, whilst they daily added to what, in time, might prove a little fortune from their earnings.

The brightest apples in the stockings, at Christmas time, in Susie's home were those from Mr. Goodman's. And under the blue May sky, looking at the old tree full of rare blossoms, Susie dreamed of the happy autumn-time, and carefully tied the strings of her new apron, which was neither blue nor pink, but plaid muslin pure and white, made in the most fashionable style and vastly becoming. Beside, her four school-companions who belonged to her Woman's-Rights Society all wore the same pretty apron, and rejoiced in it together.

THE ROMANCE OF A DISH-TOWEL.

BY ANNA MORRIS.

"How happens it, Tom, that you never married?" asked Harry Stanhope of his friend Tom Meredith, as the two sauntered slowly along Broadway one fine spring afternoon.

"Because I could never find any woman who would have me, I suppose," answered Tom laughingly.

"No use to tell me that, old fellow," rejoined Harry. "Girls are not so foolish as to decline taking a good-looking man like you, with plenty of money; yet here you are, nearly thirty years old, and no more prospect of settling than you had ten years ago. Now, if it were me, why the case is very different. A doctor, just struggling into practice, is scarcely considered 'eligible' by

the match-making mammas, to say nothing of their worldly-wise daughters; but they are all ready and eager to smile upon you, and you might as well make your choice."

"Thank you," answered Tom, still laughing. "When I find a young lady who can come up to my grandmother's standard of domestic virtues, I will invite her to become Mrs. Thomas Meredith."

"And what was your grandmother's peculiar doctrine on the subject?" inquired Harry.

"I presume she had more than one," said Tom, "but this she particularly impressed upon my mind. 'Always look at a woman's dish-towels,' she would remark with much solemnity. 'No matter how

* Arles, in France, is famous for the beauty of its women.

well she plays the piano, or sings, or how many languages she can speak, never marry her, unless you see that she uses soft, dry towels, and plenty of them, when she wipes dishes! Be sure that a girl who uses soiled or wet dish-towels does not know enough to be the wife of any honest man."

Harry laughed at this definition of housewifely knowledge, but presently said in a serious tone, —

"There is considerable truth in the old lady's ideas after all, but I don't quite understand how, in these days, you can apply the test; *most young ladies that we know*, have perhaps never seen a dish-towel. Now I think of it, I promised to introduce you to my cousins. There are three of them, all bright, pretty girls, though I think it doubtful whether they would fulfill your grandmother's requirements as a wife. Still you may find them pleasant acquaintances, and if you like I will go there with you now."

"Agreed," responded Tom, and the two friends soon found themselves in the parlor of Mrs. Renshaw, Harry's aunt.

The young ladies were all at home, and, as Harry had said, were bright, pretty girls. Ida, the eldest, was a tall, queenly brunette, whose magnificent dark eyes and abundant raven tresses seemed to compel universal admiration, though she had a powerful rival in Adele, the second daughter, whose delicate blonde beauty showed to fresh advantage beside her more brilliant sister. The two were acknowledged belles in their own circle, and few, who knew them, ever paused to give a second glance at their youngest sister, — little Violet. As shy and shrinking as her floral namesake, she avoided the gay assemblages in which her sisters loved to shine, and passed her hours pleasantly and peacefully with her books, her music, and her flowers. She was not present when Harry and his friend entered; but when her cousin, with whom she seemed a great favorite, asked expressly for her, Miss Adele carelessly desired the servant to call her. Tom, who was conversing with Ida, did not notice her entrance, till aroused by Harry's voice saying, —

"Mr. Meredith, let me introduce you to my cousin, Miss Violet Renshaw."

And turning quickly he was surprised at the sight of the tiny creature, so unlike her elder sisters. There was nothing magnificent and little that could be strictly termed beautiful in the almost childish figure, but

something indescribably winning in the clear, gray eyes, and in the rich chestnut curls that clustered about the broad, low brow.

Tom had little time for observation, however, as Ida and Adele claimed all his attention, while Harry monopolized Violet in a frank, brotherly way, quite unlike his more formal and ceremonious manner with the elder sisters.

"Well, what do you think of my three cousins?" was Harry's natural question, when he and Tom were once more in the street.

"I can only express my admiration by saying that I wish it were possible to divide myself into three separate and distinct individuals that I might offer each of the fair enslavers a hand and heart," replied Tom with much solemnity.

"What, without even waiting to discover whether their dish-towels are in proper order?" retorted his friend.

Tom laughed.

"I have a presentiment that I shall forget my revered grandmother's advice until it is too late, when the important event of meeting my fate shall arrive."

"And then remember it for the rest of your life, I suppose," observed Harry; "on the principle of 'marrying in haste and repenting at leisure.' Well, I hope my fair cousins will not be the cause of such a catastrophe; but I must leave you here, as I have a patient in this house."

And he ran hastily up the steps.

Left to himself, Tom sauntered slowly along, thinking of the young ladies whom he had just seen. It must be confessed that little Violet occupied but a very small portion of his thoughts, which were filled with Ida and Adele. "But I doubt if either of them ever saw a dish-towel," was his concluding reflection, as he reached his boarding-house.

Weeks passed on. Tom was devoted in his attentions to the Misses Renshaw. Rumor had assigned him first to Ida, then to Adele, and waited with impatience for the time when the engagement should be publicly announced.

Meanwhile, almost every day brought some good and sufficient excuse for him to call at Mrs. Renshaw's pleasant house; a new poem, the latest song, an invitation for a drive, or a plan for some excursion. Of Violet he saw less than of the other sisters,

though they were very friendly, and he treated her with somewhat of the same brotherly frankness as Harry.

One lovely June morning, he presented himself at Mrs. Renshaw's at quite an early hour, intending to invite the three sisters to pass the beautiful summer day in a long country drive.

He noticed that there was some delay in answering his ring, which was not usually the case with Mrs. Renshaw's well-trained servants, but at length he heard a light footstep in the hall, and in another moment the door was opened by Violet. She had a broom in her hand, and a dusting-cap covered her bright curls, but she bade him good-morning with as much cordiality as usual, and invited him to enter, adding, —

"Please walk into the dining-room, for I am just sweeping the parlors."

Secretly wondering, Tom obeyed. As he turned the handle of the dining-room door, there was a sudden rush, a hasty bang of a door, and a hurried exclamation of "O Violet! how could you?" and he found himself in the presence of the fair Adele, though for a moment he scarcely recognized her in the slovenly dressed girl, with disheveled hair, who stood by the breakfast-table dabbling the cups and saucers in some greasy water and wiping them on a towel which, to say the least, was very far from being spotlessly clean. She colored, and with some confusion of manner said, —

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Meredith. So you have come to find us all at work this morning. It happens that we have for our three servants a brother and two sisters. They received this morning the news of their mother's dangerous illness, and mamma at once gave them all permission to go home. We supposed we could get a woman who sometimes does extra work for us, but she was engaged for the day, so we are obliged to do the best we can, ourselves. I assure you," she continued, with a little laugh which Tom before had often thought pretty and engaging, but which now sounded false and affected, "that I am by no means accustomed to such work, nor have I any desire to become so."

"Cannot you allow me to assist you?" asked Tom politely. "I was brought up on a farm, and have often washed dishes and made myself generally useful about the kitchen."

"You!" exclaimed Adele in such an as-

tonished tone, that Tom could not forbear laughing.

"Yes, certainly: why not?" he inquired.

"Oh — I don't know — only I thought — you never did anything," stammered Adele; then endeavoring to seem at ease, she said hurriedly, "Yes, if you will help, please take this heavy tea-kettle into the kitchen, and set it on the stove."

Tom seized the kettle, and, throwing open the door leading to the kitchen, was crossing the room toward the stove, when his progress was arrested by the sudden appearance of Ida from a store-room beyond. If Adele looked slovenly and disheveled, what shall be said of Ida? An old dress dirty and torn, slippers run down at the heel and burst out at the sides, no collar or ruffle, very little hair instead of the magnificent tresses he had so often admired, and what there was hanging uncombed about her face, no wonder Tom started in blank astonishment.

A heavy frown took the place of the usual smile, as she curtly bade him good-morning. Tom muttered an apology for his intrusion as he deposited his burden on the stove, and turned to retrace his steps, just as Violet entered from the dining-room. She did not see him, but, addressing Ida, said, —

"Run away now, Ida dear, and dress before callers come for you. I have already sent Adele up-stairs, and will finish the dishes now I have done my sweeping."

"You have been long enough about it, I hope," muttered Ida ungraciously, but nevertheless availing herself of her sister's offer with much alacrity. "Here are the dish-towels, Violet," she said, extending several greasy, blackened articles to the young girl.

Tom had been meditating an escape; not an easy affair, as the sisters stood directly in his path: but at the word dish-towels he involuntarily stopped and glanced around. "No wonder my grandmother cautioned me," was his first thought as the soiled towels met his sight, and he hastily approved the look of disgust which crossed Violet's face as she quietly laid those aside, and, opening a drawer, took from it a plentiful supply, soft, dry and clean.

Ida and Adele had both disappeared, and Tom ventured to renew his offer of assistance to Violet, who started a little as she for the first time noticed his presence. But she recovered her composure at once, and

quietly answered, as she deftly filled the dish-pan with clean hot suds, —

"No, thank you, Mr. Meredith. I shall do very well without assistance. My sisters have not left much for me to do. You had better walk into the parlor, and they will soon join you."

"No, indeed," replied Tom. "I will take myself out of the way, with apologies for my untimely intrusion, unless you will really let me be of some service. And believe me," he added earnestly, with an admiring glance at the neat little figure tripping so lightly about the kitchen, and mentally contrasted her with her two sisters, "you will make me very happy by allowing me to help you."

"Oh, very well," said Violet, smiling and blushing a little as she met his gaze. "If you are really so much in need of employment, I will try to provide some for you. Suppose you set these dishes on the lower shelf of the closet, as I wash them, — then I can arrange them after they are all done."

Tom obeyed, and was rewarded by being allowed to bring a hod of coal from the cellar, and do various other little errands, all the while he was noticing the neatness and despatch with which Violet worked, and was especially observant of the clean, dry dish-towels, and the skill with which, when done using them, she washed and scalded and hung them to dry.

He declined the invitation to dinner, given by Mrs. Renshaw, when she came and found him assisting *Violet*, and made his way directly to Harry's office.

"I have made my choice at last, Harry!" he announced: "it is one that would suit even my grandmother!"

"Might I inquire who is the fortunate damsel?" asked Harry, laying down his book; "and how are you so sure of your revered relative's approval?"

Tom told his morning's experience, concluding with "If she will only accept me, I shall be the happiest man alive, and all owing to my dear old grandmother's good advice."

THE ROSE OF SPAIN AND THE ENGLISH LILY.

BY SALLY A. SMITH.

CHAPTER I.

Within a stately chamber of Thorpe Hall sat the brave knight, Sir John Morton, in company with his fair young bride, the Lady Janet, to whom he had been united one short month; and now, ere the honeymoon was over, he must away to the battlefield, to far-off Spain.

"O my dear lord!" said the young wife, while tears dimmed the brightness of her azure eyes, "how can I part from thee? It is cruel in the Queen to order you away, oh! so far away, from your poor Janet. And then this war, this merciless war, that spares neither the brave, the young, nor the old,—I shudder when I think what may happen; and if you, my love, my own true love, should be slain, nevermore would your poor bride smile again."

"Hush, my pretty lady-bird! do not weep and mourn over what must be. It breaks my heart to think of the long parting that so soon must come. But, darling, cheer up, and think of our happy meeting after the wars are ended. Think of the honors I shall have conferred upon me by our gracious sovereign and liege lady, Queen Elizabeth, if I am brave in battle, and conquer the foe. Think of the brightest, and bid the gloom depart."

And, imprinting a kiss on the white brow of his bride, Sir John left the apartment to give orders for his speedy departure for the seat of war.

The Lady Janet, ere her marriage, had been one of the maids of honor to the Queen, and was considered the loveliest amid the group of celebrated beauties who surrounded the royal lady. Janet, by her admirers, was called the English lily,—she was so fair in person, so pure in character. She was an orphan and an heiress; and her hand was sought by many a noble, for she was a prize worth gaining, a jewel worth wearing. But to none did she show favor until the handsome young knight, Sir John Morton, returned from foreign service, and appeared at court, when it seemed to be a case of love at first sight, for in a few short

months the lily of the English court was wooed and won by brave Sir John.

The morrow came, with its sunshine. Over the fertile hills and purple uplands the cloud-shadows floated softly, and the heavens were blue and smiling as the eyes of childhood. But the perfect summer morning, with its glowing, changing beauties, was all unheeded by the pale and drooping lily, who, bathed in tears, sat in her lofty chamber, bemoaning the hard fate that separated her from her beloved lord.

What a noble chamber was that in which the Lady Janet had secluded herself! The walls were hung with beautiful tapestry, the ceiling was painted with mythological figures, the oak floor was strewn with green rushes and freshly cut flowers, for carpets were as yet almost unknown, the carved posts of the bedstead were hung with silken curtains, and a silver night-lamp fed with perfumed oil swung by a chain in the centre of the room. The chairs and couches were inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and everything bespoke wealth and luxury.

The Lady Janet was barely eighteen, and looked still younger, with her violet eyes, golden curls, and fair complexion, while not a tinge of color marred the purity of the sweet Madonna countenance. She was dressed in a robe of cloth-of-gold, the open skirt of which displayed a petticoat of crimson brocade; her sleeves were of crimson satin, tied by strings of pearls; her girdle was of gold, surrounded by long pearl pendants; while a cross of pearls rested on her bosom.

"Oh! if kind Heaven will only spare my lord, if he can live to return to me, I will never murmur, though poverty, sickness, and misfortunes come to me. Only let me be with my own true love, and I can be happy; can bear pain, sorrow, and care, if he is near, to love me, to sympathize in all my joys and sorrows."

Thus murmuring softly, and wiping the pearly tears as they fell, the Lady Janet heeded not the time, until, aroused by the shouting of men and trampling of horses, she looked out into the court-yard of the

castle, and there she saw a goodly array of armed horsemen on strong and hardy horses. Sir John, in the centre of the group, was clad in armor. Helmets and lances shone in the morning sun, and pennons fluttered in the summer breeze. All was bustle and confusion.

Blinded by her tears, the gentle lady retired from the window, and, hearing her lord's step nearing her apartment, strove to appear with a smiling countenance; for he was coming to say farewell, and she would not make the parting more sad by her useless lamentations.

"My darling! my own bonnibel! the hour has come when we must separate. It is hard, very hard, to leave thee; but duty calls, and I must obey the summons. Bear up, my lady-bird! be a true warrior's bride, and bid me depart with a smiling countenance and a brave heart. May Heaven guard thee from all harm while I am absent!"

"I cannot help shedding tears, my love; for I shall be so lonely, so unhappy, in your absence: but I will try and bear the separation; and, if you are only spared to return to your Janet, she will forget all her grief in the joy of such a happy meeting. Here is a parting gift, my lord. Wear it for my sake, and think always of the giver."

So saying, she threw a scarf of azure silk, embroidered with lilies, over the broad shoulders of the knight.

"I will never part with it, my darling," said her husband, as he kissed the giver and the gift. "But the bugle is sounding: I must join my men. I will send tidings whenever I can. And now, my lily, my bride, farewell!"

And, embracing the almost unconscious lady, he hastily left the apartment.

Days, weeks, and months passed away. The Lady Janet, once one of the brightest ornaments at court, was seldom met at festivals, hunting parties, or any of the gay scenes. She passed her time with her embroidery, her books, and in visiting the needy and the sick. She was the good angel for miles and miles around her vast domains.

Every morning, in company with her serving men and women, she would mount her palfrey, and pay a visit to the humble homes of poverty; and her bright face and sweet smile lightened up the poor abodes like a gleam of sunshine. She gave from

her own private purse to all who came begging. No one was turned empty-handed from the hall.

So in deeds of charity and usefulness Lady Janet passed the time in the absence of her beloved lord, while each day she seemed to grow more beautiful.

One day, her cousin, the Lady Catherine Seyton, came to pass a few hours with her. She was one of the ladies in waiting at court, a young and giddy damsel of seventeen.

"Have you heard from your absent lord lately?" asked the maiden of her cousin.

"No: you know it is impossible for messages to arrive very often from such a distance. But why do you ask?"

And Lady Janet looked at her young kinswoman anxiously.

"Because the Earl of Murray has returned from Spain; and, although I have not seen him, I thought your liege lord would have sent some word, message, or token to his pale young bride, who is so good and true in his absence. Every one regrets your retirement from court, and all desire to see the lily of England once more. I" —

"Pardon me, Kate, for interrupting you; but when did the earl arrive from the seat of war?"

"Some six days since, if I rightly remember."

"My dear lord surely did not forget me. I shall despatch a messenger to Castle Murray shortly if I do not hear tidings very soon."

"See, fair coz! a horseman is approaching. It is the earl himself."

And the young coquette, opening the window, walked out upon the balcony, and waved her white hand in welcome to the handsome young earl, who, dismounting, was soon ushered into the presence of the two ladies.

He handed a sealed package to the Lady Janet, saying it was from Sir John.

After partaking of refreshments offered him by his fair hostess, — for the journey he had taken from his castle to Thorpe Hall was long and fatiguing, — the earl was showed to his apartment; and Lady Janet, with trembling fingers, opened the package. It contained a long and loving epistle from her beloved one; and a casket of rare gems, — flashing diamonds, and sapphires blue as the young bride's sweet orbs.

Sir John wrote that he was well, and as

yet unwounded; had been in a number of battles, but had escaped unhurt. His heart was aching for a sight of his bonny lily; and he prayed the war might soon end, that he might be with her once more.

CHAPTER II.

Once again it is summer, — royal, queen-like summer. The bright sunshine pours a golden shower through the glistening green of the trees; over the distant mountains hangs a veil of azure mist; in the shadowy foliage flit birds whose plumage seems to have been stolen from orient rainbows; while thousands of rare and gorgeous blossoms fill the air with perfume as they sway gracefully in the air of midsummer.

Within a stately chamber, whose magnificent appointments speak of unbounded wealth, beneath the shadow of a silken canopy, lies the unconscious figure of brave Sir John Morton. Bending over him, and bathing his brow with subtle perfumes, is a maiden fair as a poet's dream, — a bewildering beauty, all air and fire and bloom, and swift splendor, and glancing grace, as though born of the sunset and starlight, the sparkle of the seas, and the glow of the blushing roses.

This is Magdalena, the Rose of Cadiz; and Sir John is a prisoner in the gloomy old castle of the haughty don, the father of the blooming rose. Three long months has the brave and handsome knight been ill and a prisoner; and, while attending and ministering to the sick man, Magdalena, the proud and imperious beauty, who never before has felt the power of love, now bows humbly down, and pays devout homage at the mystic shrine. She devotedly and passionately loves the handsome Englishman, the foe of her country.

At length all danger is past; and Sir John opens his bewildered eyes, asking, in a faint voice, —

"Where am I? and how long have I been ill?"

"You are with those who will take every care of you; and, when you are able, you shall ride your own favorite steed once more, which you so gallantly rode on the battle-field. It is three months, Sir Stranger, since you were left for dead on the field of battle. My father, the Governor of Cadiz, seeing you revive somewhat, as the shadows of night fell over the deserted bat-

tle-ground, caused you to be brought hither. You have had a fever; but your wounds are healing rapidly, and the fever is almost abated."

All this was uttered in a low voice, in the soft, musical language of the country.

"And who are you, whom in my delirium I thought an angel? You are so fair, so kind."

And Sir John gazed inquiringly upon the blushing face of the lovely damsel.

"I am the daughter of Don Estaban Sanchez, the Governor of Cadiz. But now, Sir Knight, you must talk no more. I will read to you, and I hope ere long to see you regain your health and strength."

"One more question, and I will then be silent. Am I a prisoner?"

"You are: but I hear, that, as soon as you are able, you will be sent to England; for the war is about ended."

And the maiden sighed as she ceased speaking.

Magdalena knew nothing, in regard to Sir John, except that he was an English gentleman of birth and rank. That he was handsome she knew too well; and, in the weeks that followed the knight's convalescence, she found him well versed in accomplishments, and courteous and fascinating in manner.

Sir John had not mentioned his far-off home or his beloved wife to Magdalena; for he was sensitive and reticent where family matters were concerned; and, although the rose of Spain was lovely, kind-hearted, and full of a thousand charming wiles, yet the knight could not forget she was a foreigner and a stranger to his fair Janet.

One bright day in autumn, two days before Sir John was to leave for England, Magdalena asked her guest to accompany her to some ancient ruins a few miles from the castle; as they were of great antiquity, and were visited by all strangers.

Mounting their steeds, and followed by the retainers and pages of the castle, the knight and lady rode gayly along, the lady happy and light-hearted because she was with one she loved so fondly; the knight rejoicing that he was no longer a captive, and was so soon to be united to his dear bride, his peerless English lily.

Magdalena looked very lovely in her habit of scarlet and gold, her dark eyes shining like stars, and her long tresses, black as night, braided in a coronet, and fastened

with a jeweled arrow, *tramed in a flower-like face*, glowing and blushing as the sweet queen of the garden, her namesake.

As they rode slowly along side by side, the armed retainers and pages at a respectful distance behind, the young Spanish girl, who had often thought the English knight strangely distant in manner, although kind and courteous, at last summoned sufficient courage to ask him why he seemed to care nothing for her society, and always preferred his books or his steed, or even the solitude of his own apartment, to her company.

"For," said the impetuous and warm-hearted Spaniard, "can you not see, what I have so long tried to conceal, that I love you, Sir John; love you devotedly, truly, and fondly?"

And, with a burning blush suffusing her fair face at her bold and unmaidenly avowal, the young girl dared not look toward the knight.

If she had done so, she would have seen him start, and turn pale.

Then, with a sorrowful air, he turned toward his fair hostess, saying, —

"Magdalena, you are an angel of goodness, and have been more than a sister to me, a stranger in a strange land. It is hard to requite all your kindness with a seeming ingratitude: but I must tell you, what I should have spoken of before, that I am married; have a wife fair and pure as a lily, one who possesses every virtue, and unites beauty with goodness and love for her absent lord. I adore her, and no thought of any other affection has ever entered my heart. I fear I pain you, dear lady. But I am a true and honorable knight: no stain is on the ancient escutcheon of the house of Morton; and, please Heaven, there never shall be."

"Married!" murmured the young maiden, from whose blooming countenance all color had fled. "Then am I done with life."

To the knight she made answer in the following appeal: —

"Ah, Sir Knight! if thou hast indeed a wife, who shares thy home and love, then Magdalena must give up all thought of thee. But you can never know the bitter, weary pain that will await me when you bid farewell to Spain. I would gladly give up my rank, home, wealth, everything, for your sake, if it were honorable so to do; but,

alas! a woman's lot is to suffer and to love on while life remains. Would that I could accompany you as a page to your English home. I would never, by thought, word, or deed, do aught that would make you blush for me; but would be content to live on, uncared for, unloved, if I could but be near thee."

But Sir John would listen to nothing of the kind.

Two days after the visit to the ruined castle, Sir John bade farewell to Spain, and to the beautiful Donna Magdalena, the rose of Cadiz.

At parting, the maiden made him accept, as a present to his bride, a profusion of jewels, and a portrait of herself representing her as the Rose of Spain. She was attired in green velvet, with pearls in her raven hair, and on the velvet bodice a blood-red rose.

Waving her lily-white hand, in token of adieu, from the oriel window at which she stood, Magdalena gazed her last at the English knight.

Sir John, with a heavy heart and a sad countenance, journeyed on toward his beloved native land; for, a true and honorable gentleman, he could not but pity the lovely maiden whose life was wrecked on his account. But as he neared the land of his ancestors, and thought of his Janet, his lily filled his mind, he became more cheerful, and his heart throbbed with love and happiness.

Two long years had passed since Sir John had parted from the Lady Janet; and now, as he neared the hall, the past, with all its brief joys, the wooing and winning of his gentle bride, and the short dream of happiness afterward, all flitted through his mind, and, spurring his gallant steed, he galloped up the long, gloomy avenue that led to the ancient hall of his fathers.

Standing in the dim and shadowy portal was the slight and girlish figure of the Lady Janet; for, hearing the galloping of the steed, she, hoping against hope that her dear lord had come, hastened to the entrance to meet him. Her heart had been heavy with dim forebodings of sorrow ever since the tidings had been sent from across the seas that Sir John had been wounded, and was sick even unto death; and, in the long months of silence that followed, the English lily drooped and faded: but now, in the joy of being once more united to him

she loved so fondly, all her griefs were forgotten.

The picture of the Spanish Rose was hung on the walls at Thorpe Hall; and, when the Lady Janet asked who so fair a maiden was, Sir John answered, —

“She is the noble woman who nursed

and tended me when I was sick and a prisoner.”

So the gentle Lady Janet offered many a silent prayer for the one who had saved the life of her beloved one.

Not long after his return to England, Sir John heard of the death of Magdalena. Her unhappy secret died with her.

THE SAME NAME.

BERNICE M'CALLY POLLOCK

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THE SAME NAME.

BY BERNICE M'CALLY POLLOCK.

A wide stretch of level country, over which the winter wind was furiously drifting the snow; a substantial brick farmhouse surrounded by evergreens which waved their frozen tassels to and fro as if to evade the chilling snow-flakes,—this was the landscape that never for a single moment disappeared from the mental vision of Waldo Sands, as, with arms folded and eyes closed, he leaned back in his comfortable seat in the railway-car that was whirling him on nearer and nearer to that spot around which centred all his heart's fondest memories.

In the mean time, in the old-fashioned dining-room of the farm-house, with the flames from the log-fire leaping up the

chimney, and the cat purring contentedly at her feet, sat Margaret Sands, awaiting the return of her husband. As a loud blast of the night-wind shook the shutters, she nervously trembled, and bowed her head upon her hands.

“Oh, what shall I do!” she moaned aloud. “He can never walk across the commons from the station; and yet he will attempt it, and he will be buried in these fearful snow-drifts.”

And she sprang up, with some half-formed idea of starting out in the night and storm to meet him.

Checking the impulse, she hastily walked up and down the room, pausing mechanically, now and then, to make some trifling

alteration in the arrangement of the dishes on the waiting supper-table.

It was in one of these moments of forgetfulness that she distinctly heard the wailing cry of an infant.

Not thinking of fear, she flew to the door, and opened it; and a blaze of light, thus penetrating the darkness, discovered to her astonished gaze a woman with a child in her arms. Naturally rash and impulsive, and of quick, almost delirious sympathy with any form of distressed humanity, she put forth her hand, and drew her unresistingly into the warm room, then closed the door, and motioned her to the easy-chair in front of the fire. The forlorn creature sank into it without uttering a word, and with shaking hands began to remove her snow-covered wrappings. Springing forward, Margaret cried, —

"Let me help you!"

Taking the child on her own lap, she hastily unwrapped it, and tenderly chafed its cold hands.

The woman divested of cloak and bonnet was of a somewhat singular appearance. She was neither beautiful, nor the reverse. Her eyes were large and black, and when she turned them full upon Margaret's face, there was something in them which sent an unaccountable shiver through her. Her long black hair swept over her shoulders in a tangled, curling mass.

"My poor woman," said Margaret, "how came you here on this bitter night?"

"I am looking for him," replied the stranger, while her weird eyes seemed to blaze with some unknown passion.

Mrs. Sands involuntarily rose, and laid the child across its mother's knees. Then she stood reclining against the mantel, her pale face turned inquiringly toward the woman.

"For him?" she questioned.

The poor creature had noted the change in her manner; now she looked down at the face of her child, an expression that Margaret could not fathom sweeping over her countenance.

"You need not have laid the boy down so suddenly, — his touch has not contaminated you," she said coldly.

Margaret made a deprecating gesture with her hand.

"I did not think of that," she said impatiently. "But for whom are you looking?"

"For my husband, Waldo Sands," answered she.

Margaret Sands was not a weak woman; but as she stood there, something seemed to enter her veins, and change the blood in them to ice. Her limbs refused to support her, and she sank into a chair. This strange paroxysm passed off presently, and she sat up in her chair, breathing freely, while a faint tinge of color came into her face. A pang of shame and remorse had entered her breast at the thought that she could for a moment doubt her loyal husband. The re-action was strong in proportion as the first shock had been violent. She laughed almost hysterically.

"Is your husband's name Waldo Sands, too?" she asked pleasantly, but with a strange quaver in her voice.

"Yes, they told me at the village that he lived here."

"Here? that your husband lived here?"

"Certainly, madam. There is but one Waldo Sands."

A sudden flame of passionate anger leaped into Margaret's eyes.

"How dare you tell me that you have such a claim on my husband?" demanded she.

"The lady does not know me," was the answer. "I do not profess to have a claim on any person's husband but my own. But, mark you, this man whom you call your husband is none of yours. Waldo Sands is my lawful husband, and I am prepared to prove it."

"Not this Waldo Sands," replied Margaret, now convinced that the woman was insane.

"Is that your husband's portrait?" asked the stranger, pointing to a life-size painting of Waldo Sands when ten years younger than now.

"It is," said Margaret.

"Well, that is the only man of that name I ever knew, and he is my husband, and the father of this child."

Mrs. Sands raised her hand, and pointed toward the door, her face ghastly in its whiteness, her whole attitude the imperoration of outraged womanhood. Sitting thus, even in that moment of supreme anger, her eyes fell half-pityingly on the face of the sleeping child. Something there which she had not observed before suddenly riveted her gaze, and held her spell-bound as completely as the wily serpent holds the

futtering bird. It was the unmistakable resemblance in every outline of its features to her own husband, Waldo Sands. She sank back in her chair, shaking as with the ague, her breath coming in quick gasps like the breath of a dying woman. She heeded not the stamping of heavy boots on the portico, she saw not the manly form entering through the doorway, she heard not the cherry, ringing, —

"Thank God! home again at last!"

She felt not the tender arm clasping her, the warm kisses raining on brow and cheeks and lips.

"Margaret, little wife, are you ill? Look up, darling! speak to me!"

But she bent on him a look of chilling repugnance that sent him staggering backward as no dagger-thrust could have done. She pointed toward the woman.

"Do you see her?" she asked, the words dropping over her lips like particles of ice.

"Yes. Who is she?" he questioned, in utter amazement at his wife's manner.

"She says she is your wife!"

Waldo Sands stood for one moment as if frozen to the spot, his eyes growing wider and wider open in the most unfeigned and bewildered astonishment. At last, —

"My wife!" he exclaimed; and then again, "My — wife!" articulating the words slowly, as if incapable of comprehending their meaning.

But it presently rushed over him like a whirlwind that this woman had brought a foul charge against him, and that Margaret, on whose entire confidence in his honor he would at any time have staked his life, had given undoubted evidence that she had credited the statement. He looked at his wife, his brown eyes burning into her face with an expression of horror and dismay that might almost have made the dead shudder.

"My God! Margaret, do you believe her?" he asked in a tone so fraught with anguish that she covered her face with her hands, a half shriek escaping her lips. He took a step toward her.

"Margaret, do you believe her?"

"I did not."

"But do you now?"

"I do."

A look indescribable, fearful, settled over his face.

"Merely on her word?"

"No."

"What then?"

"The child's testimony."

"The child's testimony? a babe like that?" and he suddenly walked up to the woman's side, and bending down closely inspected the infant's face. A chill struck into his heart, and his hand unsteadily sought his cravat-bow as if something were strangling him. The square-cut chin, the peculiar curve of the lips, the long, heavy eyelashes, the light, curling hair, — he was looking at himself in miniature.

"Woman, who are you?" he demanded, now looking for the first time narrowly at the wild, dark face.

An almost fiendish glitter came into the fierce, black eyes.

"Is it for you, Waldo Sands, to ask that?" As she said that, she took a folded paper from her pocket, and handed it, with the refinement of cruelty, to Margaret first, who mechanically took it, and let her eyes wander vacantly over it. She saw that it was to certify that Waldo Sands and Honoria Vandyke had been legally joined in matrimony by some one, in the presence of two whose names were affixed, but from the blinding mist that came before her eyes she could neither make out the name of the minister nor those of the witnesses. She handed it back to the woman, who with an insolent sneer gave it to Waldo. In the first moment of his surprise as he read it, he did not observe that Margaret slowly rose, and groping like a blind woman for the door passed from the room.

"It is a base forgery!" broke from his lips. "Or else" — and a sudden light overspread his face as he turned toward the spot where Margaret had sat.

A glance showed him the empty chair, and flinging the paper down, he hurried from the room. With a nameless presentiment freezing his blood, he mounted the stairs to his wife's chamber. He placed his hand on the door-knob: the door was locked against him.

"Margaret," said he hoarsely, "I, your husband, demand admittance!"

There was no reply, nor sound of any motion from within.

"My wife, my own true wife before God, will you not let me in?" Nothing but agonizing silence.

"She has killed herself," thought he, quaking in every nerve with some irrepressible nervous excitement. He placed his lips

down to the key-hole, that she might not fail to hear him.

"Margaret Sands," he said, "I swear by the living God that I never saw that woman's face before this accursed night, and I will prove it to you as soon as possible. Only show one vestige of faith in me, and I am nerved for any conflict. My wife, my wife, in mercy hear me! oh, let me in!" and his voice died away in a convulsive sob, while great drops of perspiration rolled down his face.

The continued silence in the room first almost maddened him, and then nearly paralyzed him with fear, — fear of he knew not what.

"By heaven, I will enter!" he exclaimed; and placing his foot against the lower part of the door, the lock gave way, and he stood within his wife's room.

No sooner had he effected an entrance than he saw the reason of her silence. She lay prone upon the bed, unconscious of anything that might be passing around her. Her long black hair was unbound, and fell over the pillow, while her right arm was thrown over her head, half concealing the pallid brow. Waldo was instantly kneeling at her side, wildly calling her name; but his tones fell on deaf ears. He snatched her up against his breast, beseeching in piteous accents that she would awake, himself utterly incapable of thinking what course was best to pursue. His senses returned to him presently, though, and he saw that this was no ordinary fainting fit. He laid her gently back on the pillows, and rose to his feet. He knew not what to do. The only persons about the place, save the strange woman, whose very existence he had long forgotten, were an ignorant servant-girl and a man-of-all-work. A physician could not be found under a five-mile ride, and who but himself could he dare trust to go for one on such a terrible night? The hired man might miss the way in the snow-drifts, or the doctor might make an excuse, and fail to come. He threw up his hands, as if imploring aid from above.

"O God, my God! what shall I do!" he groaned aloud.

A sudden thought striking him he took a flask of brandy from the closet, and forced some into her mouth, and then bathed her temples and her wrists with it. At last, a faint sigh struggled across her lips, and she opened her eyes. She smiled upon him

with all her wonted sweetness as he folded her close against his breast.

"My love! my love!" murmured he brokenly, "you will not again express or feel a doubt of me, will you?"

The head that rested against his bosom was slowly raised, and her eyes sought his with a gaze that darkened, and darkened with such unendurable agony that Waldo shrank back from her again as he might have done, had she struck him, while there swept over him the thought that with the cessation of consciousness there had been a season of forgetfulness, — that the smile was one she would have given him before this horrible thing had overtaken him, but never after having believed him a bigamist. He rose from his kneeling posture by the bed, gently but not coldly putting her hands out of his. He stood slightly bending over her, but not touching her, his face expressing such heart-rending sorrow that the wife who could no longer trust him dared not to look at him.

"My wife," said he slowly and with difficulty, "I want to tell you that if you persist in this heartless cruelty toward me, I shall be in the mad-house before another week."

Margaret lay with her hand over her eyes, but she made a movement as if she waited to hear more.

"I will sift this matter to the bottom, if you will but once look into my eyes, and say 'Waldo, I trust you.' But, in the name of God, how is my reason to hold out when you actually believe me capable of such a crime as this? I tell you solemnly, Margaret, I cannot bear it. I am only human. I can bear what humanity can bear, nothing more; and I tell you, with God between us, that this will kill me!"

Margaret, as if inspired with strength from above, rose from the couch, and walked toward the fire. She leaned her head against the mantel, and with the flames throwing a weird light over her ghostly face, gazed silently into the glowing embers. What was passing through her God alone knew. I think she scarce comprehended herself, all of her own thoughts; but they seemed to shape themselves into something like this: So long as her husband denied the charge, so long as he entreated her not to credit it, and vowed solemnly to place the positive proof of his innocence before her, was it just to obstinately condemn him before he

had had an opportunity to thoroughly disprove the woman's statement? She turned toward him, something of this in her face. He was standing precisely where she had left him, nor did he now move a step nearer to her. With a strange, divine pity in her eyes, she held out her hands to him.

"Waldo, I trust you!" she said faintly.

He sprang to her side, he caught her in his arms, and held her tight against his heaving breast, as though not even death itself should ever tear her from him. He bent over her, and kissed her with his trembling lips, while his tears rained down over her face and hair. It is said that a man cannot bear to see a woman weep, but he can look upon it with calmness compared with the tumult of emotion with which a woman beholds a man weep, especially if that man is her husband. She put her arms around his neck, a moan breaking over her lips.

"O Waldo!" she cried, "forgive me for causing you such suffering. It kills me to see you shedding tears. I know there is some satisfactory explanation of this strange affair. The resemblance that struck me so may be — no doubt is — purely accidental."

Her words soothed him. He sat down in an easy-chair, and drew her down to his knee.

"Now I am myself, Margaret," he said, with grave tenderness. "Now I can think clearly. That cruel pain is quite gone from my heart, darling. I am happy so long as you love and trust me, and no longer. I do not believe the resemblance to be accidental. I have never talked much with you concerning my family, for I really know little or nothing of them, except that I have an uncle in New York who I am now certain has a son named Waldo. The reason that I know so little of my relatives is that there was a family quarrel before I was born, about which I know very little, except that it was a fatal one, and forever separated the only two brothers of the Sands name. I am now convinced that this cousin of mine is the father of that child, for the blood of the Sandeses must, assuredly, be in its veins."

"But how are you to find out, Waldo, and meantime what will be done with the woman?"

"I know not what is to be done with her, unless I send her to the village tavern until

I return, for I shall start tomorrow morning for New-York City, in search of my cousin, Waldo Sands."

"O Waldo! you must not think of going in this weather. Let the woman stay here a few days. You cannot go."

"Margaret, it is useless to say that. I will not wait here inactive until this scandal is spread over five counties. But, my darling, I will return to you just as soon as it is possible for me to find that which I go to seek."

Waldo Sands kept his word. He took his departure early the next morning, before the household was astir, leaving the matter of where the woman should await his return to be settled at his wife's discretion. Margaret had not the heart to turn her with her child out in the snow-drifts, so she gave her a comfortable room, and had her meals taken to her, telling her to content herself for a few days, that everything would be arranged satisfactorily. The poor creature made no objection, and Margaret felt her conscience at rest, as well as a certain relief that she should not have to face her, even at table.

Waldo had much less difficulty in ascertaining the residence of his cousin than he had anticipated. Having learned this, he made a few judicious inquiries, and found that he was a married man, that he was wealthy and influential, and a deacon in the church. He was considerably surprised at this intelligence, as he had already disposed of him in his own mind as a dissipated rake who would not scruple to betray innocence. He walked up the marble steps to the door of his cousin's fine mansion, and with a trembling hand rang the bell. He presented his card to the footman, who with a great deal of ceremony ushered him into the drawing-room.

Waldo had scarcely time to seat himself when a man's hasty tread sounded in the hall, and his cousin entered with his eyes fixed in amazement on the card which he held in his hand, and wearing a very puzzled expression of countenance. The two Waldos stood looking blankly at each other for a moment. Of course, the one whom I shall now call Mr. Sands knew what was due to a stranger who had called at his house; but that which had startled him so was not merely that the name on the card was his own,—it was the strange resemblance of this man to himself. At length,

he stepped toward Waldo, and, bowing courteously, said,—

"Pardon me, I have the honor of meeting" — then paused with an inquiring look, as though he would have added, "whom?"

"Your cousin, Waldo Sands," supplied Waldo politely.

There was a strange, unpleasant glitter came into the man's eyes, as he glanced first at Waldo, then at the card.

"My cousin?" he articulated, coldly elevating his eyebrows, but still looking down.

"At any rate," amended Waldo, "another Waldo Sands."

"So it seems," was the unsatisfactory response.

A faint tinge of color came into Waldo's face.

"You have, then, even heard less of me than I of you?" he said interrogatively.

"I know not what you may have heard of me, sir, but I certainly never heard of you before."

"That you see me now, is no fault of mine. The occasion which brings me here does not arise from the fact that we are cousins, but from the singular coincidence that we resemble each other, and bear the same name."

"Resemble each other, and bear the same name," repeated the man slowly, raising his eyes to Waldo's with a quick, inquiring, but unsteady gaze.

Waldo, being at a loss how to proceed, remained silent, vainly endeavoring to gather something from the expression of his cousin's face. Mr. Sands presently laid the card on the table, and said with a smile,—

"There is either some relationship between us, or nature has played a singular freak. You had, no doubt, some object in seeking this interview. Pray be seated, and we will proceed at once to business."

And he waved him to a chair with the air of a polished gentleman.

Waldo seated himself, bowing slightly, in acknowledgment of his host's condescension. Then, glancing half-nervously at the door which stood slightly ajar, he said,—

"Is there danger that we shall be interrupted?"

Mr. Sands looked at him with unfeigned astonishment depicted on every feature.

"Assuredly not," he said, and, rising, closed the door carefully. Returning, he seated himself in close proximity to Waldo,

vainly endeavoring to conceal a painful uneasiness of manner. His face expressed nothing that Waldo could possibly construe into a fear that any revelation was about to be made that might closely touch his honor. The two men remained some moments silent. Mr. Sands, however, presently glanced at his watch, as if to intimate that time was flying. Waldo knew that nothing whatever was to be gained by trying to evade the question, or by approaching it in a roundabout way. So he took from his pocket a copy of the marriage certificate, which he had written off from memory, and handed it to the man, who, although he was in very truth his cousin, and was convinced of the fact, yet could scarcely bring himself to frankly admit it. He read it through carefully, then rose, and without looking at Waldo went to the door, and turned the key in the lock. Then with his eyes cast on the carpet and his hands behind him, in one of which he still held the paper, he slowly paced the floor, to all appearances oblivious of another's presence in the room. His face did not wear the expression of a man bowed down with a fear that some crime of which he had been guilty had been found out, but that of a man suddenly overtaken with an awful retribution. That he stood back within the portals of the past was evident, though what was in his mind it was, of course, impossible for Waldo to divine. After some moments, he came and sat down by Waldo, and turned his face, looking ten years older, full upon him.

"This," he said, holding up the certificate in a hand which trembled perceptibly, "this, I presume, is not the original?"

"Oh, no," replied Waldo hastily, at the same time reaching out his hand for it, as if he feared he might destroy it.

A half-smile in which lurked contempt touched the man's lips.

"I have no intention of burning it," he said. "If it were the original, I should not think of that."

"Certainly not," said Waldo coldly. "But," added he impatiently, "have you nothing to say? Can you throw no light on this subject?"

As Waldo had done before him, Mr. Sands now glanced uneasily toward the door, as if he fancied some one might have an ear at the key-hole. Then, sinking his voice to a whisper, he said,—

"The woman is not my wife."

Waldo was prepared for this declaration.

"If not your wife, what is she?" demanded he, rising, and confronting him with threatening aspect.

"Calm yourself," returned Mr. Sands, authoritatively waving him to a seat. "There is no occasion for you to be agitated. I have no desire to make an innocent man suffer in my stead, nor have I the slightest inclination to outrage my conscience any further. Yet I tell you candidly the woman is not and never was my wife."

"I repeat, then, what is she?"

A burning red mounted to Mr. Sands's face.

"Only a poor deluded creature."

"Deluded by whom?"

"Can you ask?"

"By you?"

"By me."

A look of indescribable loathing settled over Waldo's face, and he shrank farther from him.

"I understand that look," said Mr. Sands. "But I ask, is it not better to confess than to deny it, and possibly make you suffer in my place?"

"I appreciate your magnanimity," said Waldo with politeness. "But will you explain what this marriage certificate means?"

His cousin hesitated, as if undecided whether to say more, or to maintain silence upon the subject.

"I have seen the day," he began, after a while, "when every torture of the Inquisition might have been applied to me in vain to make me open my mouth in regard to this matter. But I see things differently now. I see by your face that something, possibly your honor, is at stake. Now I first desire you to tell me all you know about it, and how you came by that certificate. Is it, as I more than suspect, a case of 'mistaken identity,' as the police reports have it?"

Waldo, of course, without any hesitation, placed the facts which he possessed before his cousin. Again that burning blush stained Mr. Sands's face for a moment. He bowed his head down on his open palms, and a groan escaped him.

"Accursed folly of an accursed time," he said, raising his head presently. "It would be worse than diabolical," he went on, "to make you, by my silence, bear the penalty which I alone deserve; for the likeness be-

tween us being so striking, it could not be proven against me any more than you, and the probability is that I could very comfortably shift the whole thing upon your shoulders. My position in society is such, — however, I will not speak of that now. The woman, as I told you, is no wife of mine, or any one else's, I presume. I met her in New Hampshire. It was at a time of my life when I am certain that the Devil had the exclusive control of all my actions. I feared not God, much less regarded man. I was with a set of wild companions, — almost outlaws, the whole gang of us. I blush to think of it. I met this girl, Honoria Vandyke. She was innocent and ignorant, a servant-girl. Her virtue, however, was altogether untarnished. I made love to her in the most precise and proper manner imaginable. I gained her consent to marry me. I arranged it with the boys that one of them should disguise himself as a clergyman, that he was to take two of the others with him for witnesses, and meet me in an out-of-the-way spot in the country, and perform the ceremony by moonlight. But, to my chagrin, Honoria insisted on having a marriage certificate. This was accordingly written out by me, and signed by the three others. I lived with her a week or so, and then deserted her, as I had all the time intended doing; and I have never heard of her since, until you placed this paper in my hand."

No one beholding this man could doubt that the confession had cost him the deepest pain and humiliation; and with the just contempt with which Waldo regarded him there was mingled a sort of half pity.

"And now," resumed Mr. Sands, "what must I, what can I, do?"

"Use your own judgment," was the reply.

"Will you promise me that you will keep this shameful story from my wife's ears?"

"I solemnly promise."

"Then I must see the woman. She would never believe that there were two men so much alike. She would put you to great trouble, no doubt."

"You speak truly. But how will you see her?"

"I will go back to your home with you."

"Will you!" exclaimed Waldo, his face flushing with gratitude.

"Nothing else will do. I will engage to make her and her child comfortable for life

by settling an annuity upon them. All this can be done only by an interview with her."

"The train leaves in half an hour. Can you be ready by that time?"

"I will meet you at the depot," he returned, waving Waldo an impressive adieu with his hand.

Mr. Sands kept his word, fully determined, it appeared, to atone, in some degree, for his past atrocious wrong doing. The surprise of Margaret upon seeing her husband accompanied by another person so singularly like him in form and feature was perfectly boundless. Waldo, in compliance with a previous request, had him shown immediately into the strange woman's presence. What passed between the two must forever remain as a sealed book. The interview was an hour long, and at its expiration Mr. Sands took his departure, without once alluding to the relationship existing

between himself and Waldo, or expressing the slightest hope that they should ever meet again.

On the evening of the same day the woman also went away, they did not ask her whither; though they hospitably pressed her to remain for a few days, until the weather should change, but she refused absolutely. That night, standing in the cheerful dining-room, with his arm around his wife's waist, Waldo looked down at her, and smilingly whispered, —

"My darling, tell me if you are glad you trusted me?"

She put her arms about his neck, and fervently kissing him, said, —

"Forgive me, I pray you, for doubting you even for a moment!"

He gathered her to his breast, and bent his cheek down to hers; and that was all his answer.

THE SISTERS.

BY ESTHER SERLE KENNETH.

"Miss Kenneth," said Mrs. Hawley, "I have thought of a nice story to tell you."

"Oh, I am delighted!" cried I.

Mrs. Hawley had come into my room to spend the evening. I had given her my rocking-chair and my pet hassock, and ever since her installment in the place of honor I had watched the rapidity and capability with which she hemmed towels. She had been with me little more than an hour, yet she had a whole pile finished, and laid on the bureau.

"It's about Mr. Olivan," she continued. "He was just the handsomest man I ever set my eyes on. When he applied to me for board, I had no idea that I had anything which would suit him, he had such a grand air, — as if he were used to living in palaces, for anything I knew, — yet not a bluster or a bit of fuss about him. That was just it. It's these quiet people who are somebody. Those who make a great flourish of trumpets are commonly people good for nothing but to blow their own horns. Mr. Olivan was one of the gentry, as we used to say at home, in Halifax. He looked at the rooms I had empty, and I thought of course that he'd say, very politely, that they would n't suit, and walk off, when he said, bland and pleasant, —

"The front chamber would do very well, if I could also have the adjourning bedroom; and that is occupied, you say?"

"Well," said I, considering, "the room is occupied now, but perhaps I could make some change to accommodate a boarder who would be permanent."

"I think I might be permanent," said he, smiling.

"So I went right into Mr. Egerton's room,

and asked him if he would have any objection to taking the room over the one he had, at a dollar less a week. He said 'No;' and, very soon after, I found that he was very glad of the diminished expense.

"So Mr. Olivan came. The day before, a man came with the furniture, and put down the carpet, — for Mr. Olivan furnished the room himself, — and it was the most beautiful carpet I ever saw in my life. It was velvety, and looked just like a June field full of violets and roses. Then there were silk sofas, and velvety lounging-chairs, and table carved in all kinds of graceful ways, and pictures, and great boxes of books and knick-nacks. I declare! after he got his room all fixed, it was always a great treat for me to go in there. He had some splendid pictures, and before the grate was a fire-screen painted just like a picture on the wall. He said Clarkson Stanfield painted it; but I did n't care anything about who painted it, though it did my eyes good to look at it. Then there were vases, and statuettes, and all kinds of curious things that I never saw the like of before. And books — my dear, the books that man had! — a great book-case full, and then the shelves of the closet piled with them, and boxes of them never unpacked.

"Well, he used to read and smoke, and go down the harbor evenings, and play beautifully on the flageolet; and I don't know that he did anything else. I soon heard that he was very rich, and he acted as though he was, giving away his money to the servants, and to organ-grinders (though he gave it to them to go away from under his windows), just as though money was as free as water.

"He was handsome, I said. I knew there would be a great pulling of caps among the

girls. Miss Champlin was the first to present herself to his notice. She used to wear pink, after he said, one day, at the table, that he liked the color. She flamed out immediately in pink wrappers, and in pink muslins, and her bonnets were pink, — bright rose-red and pink. I used to think that she'd set the house a fire.

"But Mr. Olivan's heart stood the siege pretty well. He used to chat with her, and give her flowers, but I could see that he did n't care a straw for her.

"She'd boarded with me for over a year, and ever since she'd been here she'd been saying that her sister was coming down from up country, where she was staying with her aunt. Right in the heart of that summer she came.

"Miss Champlin was a school-teacher, and had a good salary, and I say to this day that she was a selfish and cruel girl to let her little sister work as she did. That Agnes Champlin was the slenderest bit of a thing you ever saw in your life, and her wearing black made her look smaller. She was n't a bit pretty to look at, though her sister was really handsome; but then she had pretty ways, and a low, pretty voice. She was lovely, somehow; and I used to tell her that she seemed to need a mother to take care of her, and that, when she wanted anything, I wanted her to come and tell me.

"It's a fact that her sister was not good to her. I don't know why, for there were only these two: their father and mother were dead. But Miss Champlin never showed the least love for Aggie. Agnes had an embroidering machine, and used to work from morning till night for her living, and I don't think that her sister ever put herself out in the least to make things lighter and pleasanter for her. Miss Champlin had her vacation in August, and went to the White Mountains; but Aggie staid at work, and never went anywhere, or saw anything, or seemed to take any comfort of her young life, till matters came to a crisis.

"She'd been getting thinner and paler for a long time. She'd worked very hard, and then she wa'n't naturally strong, and besides I think she had a heavy heart to wear upon her. She was as affectionate as a child, but there did n't seem to be a soul to be kind to her, or care a straw about her. I know she cried herself to sleep night after night.

"Well, one night some of the boarders were in Mr. Olivan's room, — they often

were, — and Miss Champlin was amongst them. They had been singing, Miss Champlin playing on her guitar, and Mr. Olivan making the sweetest music I ever heard on his flageolet. By and by they got to playing plays, just like a set of children, and they called me up to judge of the forfeits.

"They got into great glee. By and by, just to see how she would take it, I judged Miss Champlin to kiss Mr. Olivan. She was looking her best. She wore a dress of pink merino, with a little black velvet sacque over it, and pink ribbons among her black curls. She turned round to him as saucy as could be, and put up her face (looking as handsome as a picture, — I will say that for her), when Mr. Olivan, who was just going to put his arms round her, stopped, with his eyes turned toward the door. I looked, and there was Aggie. I had n't more than time to see who it was, before she slipped down to the floor in a deadly faint, just as she began to ascend the stairs.

"Mr. Olivan made two steps to her, and caught her up in his arms as if she had been a baby. He brought her in, and laid her on the lounge. Everybody was scared, for she looked more as if she was dead than if she had fainted. Somebody unfastened her clothes, and threw a shawl over her, and I bathed her face, and chafed her hands; but still she lay as though she was dead. By and by some one said, —

"'Don't you want to send for a doctor for your sister, Miss Champlin?'

"'No,' said she. 'She has fainted like this before. She will soon come to.'

"With that, Mr. Olivan turned around, surprised.

"'Is she your sister?' said he, for he had always heard her called Miss Aggie.

"'Yes,' said Miss Champlin.

"'Your own sister?'

"'Yes,' she answered.

"I saw him look from one to the other as if he were astonished.

"And I did not wonder. For here was Miss Helen Champlin, looking like a very queen, all beauty and smiles, and handsomely dressed; and there was that little thing, looking so poor and pale and broken that it seemed marvelous how they could be related.

"Mr. Olivan seemed to know, instantly, that there was something wrong. Of course the play was all broken up; and, when Aggie came to, she was taken up-stairs. When I

looked into his room again to say that she was much better, and was doing very well, he was walking the floor in a brown study.

"Mrs. Hawley," said he, "what makes such a difference between those girls if they are sisters?"

"Why," said I, "because each lives according to their means and advantages. Miss Helen seems to be the fortunate one, and Aggie has to put up with her lot. She embroiders for a living; the other one teaches school."

"But, if they are sisters," he began, then stopped. "That little one," said he, "looks — forlorn."

"And why should she look any other way?" said I. "She has n't any accomplishments or confidence to make people admire her; she's poor, and it takes all her time and attention to earn her living."

"But she's so young," said he. Then, seeming to be conscious, suddenly, how sad the case was, he rumbled his hair all over his head, in a perplexed way. "Has n't she any friends?" asked he.

"No," said I. "I don't think she has."

"Is n't her sis'er kind to her?"

"No," said I flatly. "She is n't what I call kind. She might make her sister's life a great deal easier if she had a mind to. If she'd only take some of the money she uses to buy pink ribbons for herself, and give her sister a little recreation, and if she'd just show a little human feeling for the poor child's weakness and weariness, she'd be much more credit to herself."

"I never thought Miss Champlin unkind," said he.

"I suppose not," said I.

"We all have faults, Mrs. Hawley," said he; "perhaps Miss Champlin is thoughtless."

"Perhaps she is," said I. "Good-night."

"And I went out and shut the door."

"But I thought there was a little change in his manner toward Miss Champlin after that. He was n't quite so free. But she still dressed for him, and claimed his attention at every opportunity; and he still chatted with her in a gay way. But he took more notice of Aggie than he had done; though, to be sure, he did n't get on very well with her, she was so dreadfully shy. I used to wish she would be a little more sociable with him, for he had had a kind feeling for her ever since the evening she fainted. But it seemed as if he awed her, or something, for she was as shy as a bird of him."

"Well, cold weather came on. One day Mr. Olivan heard a conversation in the hall which settled matters, and brought the story to an end."

"One forenoon the girls were dressing to go out. It was the coldest day we had had, and as I went through the hall I told them to wrap up as warmly as they could or they would freeze. When I got to the head of the stairs I thought I would go back and offer Aggie my furs, for her clothes did n't seem half warm enough to face such a wind with. Just then I heard Aggie say, —

"Helen, can't you let me take your son-tag? I shall be so cold!"

"No," said Helen: "I want it myself."

"But your cloak is thicker than mine, and you have furs. Besides, you have on warm under-flannels, Helen, and I have n't any. I should think you might spare the son-tag."

"Well, I sha'n't. If you were only smart, you might earn clothes enough for yourself. But if I get Olivan, Ag, you may have my son-tag and furs too, and he shall get me a set of sables like Lou Chester's."

"O Helen! how can you speak so? — of getting him!" said Aggie, as if she were distressed. But Helen laughed.

"You just see me do it!" said she.

"Just then Mr. Olivan came out of the parlor, and walked right by them without speaking. He must have heard every word they had said. I know Helen Champlin thought so, for she turned white as a sheet."

"It was plain enough that he had by what happened the next day. He just asked Aggie Champlin to marry him. He told me that he had done so, and that she had promised to be his wife, and that they were to be married in a few weeks, and would still board with me."

"So it was. When Helen knew it, she made the best of it. She had got Mr. Olivan in the family, as they said of Fanchon in the play, and perhaps she was satisfied; but I think in my heart that she hated her sister and Mr. Olivan too. About a year afterward she married a merchant named Dalton, and went to Chicago. But I have heard since that she had half-ruined him by her extravagance."

"The Olivans staid with me two years; then Aggie's baby was born, and, as she was n't very strong, they went traveling for her health. I hope I shall see them again some time, for I got much attached to them."

THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET.

BY BELLE STUART.

I had barely time to reach the depot, procure my ticket, and step aboard the train bound East; and while I am comfortably ensconced on the luxurious cushions of a palace car, my feet elevated to an agreeable, though decorous attitude, *I will briefly recount* who I am, whence I have come, and whither I am bound. My name, then, is *Fred Bissell*, at your service, not M. D., LL. D., or D. D., but simply Fred Bissell, unvarnished and unadorned, and I was nine and thirty, the first day of October, but lately past; I have just arrived, some five or six hours since, on the good steamer "*Ville du Havre*, from Liverpool, at which place I have been sojourning for a considerable number of years; and I am on my way to No. 36 R—Street, Boston, to clasp once again the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Bradley, certain old friends of mine, upon whose faces I have not looked, and from whom I have not heard, for twenty long years. So much for myself; now a word concerning these friends.

George Bradley is as fine, generous-hearted, noble a fellow as ever drew the breath of life. He and I were born — when we were quite small, as some one has remarked — into houses whose gardens were separated simply by an evergreen hedge; and were close, fast friends from the time we first began to toddle, up through all the stages of block-building, kite-flying, coasting, and school-life friends, with a friendship which has never known diminution, nor shadow of change, no, not even when put to the severest of all tests, rivalry in the heart's deepest affections.

I was nineteen when I first met Mrs. Bradley, at that time Helen Margrave. It was the summer succeeding the termination of my college career, and I was at home for a few months prior to entering upon the serious concerns of life. She was visiting in *George Bradley's home*, and — well, I came, I saw, I loved. As had always been my custom in matters of deep interest to myself, I lost no time in unburdening my heart, in confessing my all-absorbing passion to my faithful George; and he, when I

had ceased speaking, grasped my hands in a vice-like clasp, and exclaimed in husky tones, —

"We are in the same boat, Fred; Heaven help us! but each must just do the best he can for himself; and whichever one fails must wish the other God speed, and bear his loss as bravely as he can."

Well, I had the first interview with the dear girl, pressed my suit earnestly, passionately, and — failed; and the next morning, at a very early hour, I took my departure for New York, where, in a few days, I received a long, closely written sheet, from George, expressive of great sympathy and compassion for my bitter disappointment, and announcing his own triumphant success. I did not attend their marriage; I could not. But I sent them the very handsomest gift which persistent search and a full purse could procure, together with my cordial, heartfelt well-wishes; and the very day of the wedding set sail for England, whence I have but just now returned.

With eager, beating heart, I drove to No. 36 R—Street, Boston, and was ushered into a wide, spacious hall, on one side of which extended an elegant parlor, rich in blue and gilt furnishings, in rare, exquisite works of art, in costly articles of virtue; and on the other, a smaller apartment, furnished in crimson and brown. A warm, bright room was this last, with tall mahogany book-cases lining the walls on either side, with a large bow window, filled with rare hot-house plants, at one end, and a cheerful, crackling grate fire at the other; and with cozy easy chairs, ottomans, and sofas scattered about in profusion everywhere. At a table in the centre of the apartment was seated a handsome young lady, reading, whom, as she raised her eyes, attracted by the bustle of my entrance, I recognized as Helen Margrave Bradley, my lost love, the woman for whose sake I had remained all these years solitary and alone, for I had never married. I hastily advanced, hat in hand, and exclaimed in tremulous tones, —

Mrs. Bradley, Helen, don't you know me?"

The girl started to her feet, undisguised amazement pictured upon every feature of her fine countenance, and made answer politely, —

"I think you are mistaken, sir; I am not Mrs. but Miss Bradley. Papa and mamma are out this evening, but if you will be seated will soon return, I think;" and then, a sudden light flashing into her eyes, she continued, cordially, before I could recover from my stupid blunder, — yes, stupid, for had I but glanced at my own face in the mirror I should have remembered that Helen could not have remained the same youthful personage whom I had loved and lost so long ago, — "Ah, I see how it is now; you are papa's friend from Europe. He did not suppose you could reach us before tomorrow morning, else he would not have gone out;" and in an incredibly short space of time she had relieved me of my hat and overcoat; had had my trunks carried in from outside; had drawn an easy chair for me before the fire, and had a cup of steaming coffee and some delicious cakes and biscuits served me there; and was seated at my side, exercising her powers of entertainment with an ease and grace inherited directly from her mother. She was wondrously like her mother, this girl of nineteen, and I mistake me much if I did not many times during the evening note that similarity through eyes dewy with unshed tears.

Presently the outer door was thrown open, admitting a gentleman and lady of somewhat elderly appearance. I started to my feet, trembling in every limb, a strange mist before my eyes, a wild throbbing at my heart; and hastening forward, I fear passing my old friend George by unheeded in my eager haste, I grasped the lady's hands with some unintelligible words of greeting. *Can this be the Helen of my youth?* I thought with wondering amazement, when the mist had partially cleared away, and I could distinguish objects more clearly. Is it possible that this stout, somewhat bowed form, this brow thickly traced with lines of care, this hair white as the driven snow, — I was two years her senior, and had as yet not a gray hair amongst the black, — is it possible that these could have ever belonged to the slender, brown-haired, merry girl of yore? It appeared incredible that such could be the case, and seemed more probable that yonder girl, with the bright

smile, the sympathetic tear, were that blithe maiden, than the dignified, matronly woman before me.

But I could not forever stand gazing in mute surprise at the lady of the house; I must make some response to the eager, demonstrative welcome accorded me by her husband; and, turning to the latter, I heartily returned his affectionate greeting, holding him off at arm's length to scan the well-remembered features. Ah! he, too, was changed, greatly changed. His hair and beard, once so glossy and black, were now thickly sprinkled with silver threads; across his forehead and about the corners of the mouth were drawn deep furrows, whilst his eyes had an anxious, troubled expression, as though ever on the alert for danger, ever brooding over some secret weight of care. What was it, I wondered, that had so aged my friends? Something other than the natural flight of the years, I was sure; but I deferred the solution of the knotty problem to some future time, whilst I gave myself up to the fascinations and enjoyments of the hour. They were thoroughly, unfeignedly glad to see me, these friends, — there was no doubt about that, — and extended to me such enthusiastic, cordial welcome that I wondered much I could have remained away so long, wondered I had not sooner claimed their hospitality. Long and earnestly we conversed, going over the old days, talking of the old acquaintances, many of whom had passed to the shining shore since last we had met, putting eager questions, giving rapid answers; and when at a late hour we parted for the night, and I was shown to a comfortable as well as elegant apartment on the second floor, I retired to the inviting couch but to toss from side to side in restless excitement, and at last to sink into fitful, troubled dreams, in which Helen Margrave, Mrs. Bradley, and Jeanie Bradley, mingled and intermingled, and merged one into the other in inextricable confusion.

Further intercourse, more extended communication with these people, but served to deepen my first impression that some heavy sorrow, some carking care was gnawing at the vitals of their hearts, was slowly sucking their life's-blood away. It needed not the eye of affection to discover this either. It must have been patent to the most casual observer, I think; for ever upon their countenances there lurked the grim phantom

of care, keeping back all joy and brightness, holding full sway with the sceptre of gloom. And if, perchance, some unusual excitement or pleasure drove the gray shadow for a brief space away, some chance word, sound, or allusion invariably lured it back, accompanied by a start, a rush of the warm blood to the cheek, or a deep, long-drawn sigh. What could be the cause of all this evident distress and uneasiness of mind? I ruminated over and over again. Not, certainly, business troubles, for repeated, careful inquiry had elicited the facts that the counting house, in which George Bradley was a full partner, was carrying on a flourishing business, and did not owe a dollar in the world; furthermore, I had observed the lines on Bradley's brow relax and smooth themselves out as we approached his office of mornings, and deepen, knit together again in proportion as we left that little six-by-eight apartment in the rear, and drew near his home. Neither could it be some wish or desire of the heart unfulfilled, for they had everything to make them happy and content; an elegant house, horses and carriages at their disposal, numerous kind, appreciative friends, and every comfort and luxury which wealth and refined taste could procure. And by all means it appeared to me it could not be domestic difficulties of any sort or description; Mr. and Mrs. Bradley were as devoted and loving as it is possible for husband and wife to be, pure, abiding affection shining forth in every glance, expressing itself in each word and tone and deed; and their daughter was beautiful, accomplished, obedient to their every wish, and, it was easy to perceive, the very darling of their hearts. What, then, was it, this trouble? What the skeleton hand which had swept thus early in life their youth from their grasp, and was pushing them on with relentless haste toward grave, anxious, premature old age?

Several chance words dropped, one or two strange incidents occurring, during those first weeks of my sojourn in this delightful home, appeared at first to throw some light upon, but afterwards, when sifted down, did not afford much, if any, clew to, the mystery after all. I will relate them. We had been speaking, on the evening of my arrival, of Jeanie, of her marked resemblance to her mother, and so forth, and I naturally enough enquired if she were the only child. The parents flushed crimson,

muttered some unintelligible words, and seemed at a loss for an answer, when their daughter came to their relief with a gay, —

"Papa and mamma find me as much as they can well manage without any other children," and then adroitly changed the subject.

Then the following day, as George and I were lingering over our morning cigar, I casually remarked, —

"I think I heard something of another child, Bradley; what became of it? Did it die?"

I could not see my companion's face, but I fancied his tone was slightly constrained as he evasively made answer: —

"Ah, Fred, old boy! we are too often robbed of our darlings by that grim monster, death," and he forthwith fell to moralizing upon the subject.

A little later I asked Helen, — not from any desire to pry into family matters, to cause confusion or embarrassment, please understand, — but merely because the simplest, minutest facts concerning this household, were inexpressibly interesting to me. I asked her if the child she lost was a girl.

"The child I lost?" she repeated after me in evident embarrassment, and then quickly added as she caught her husband's warning glance, "Oh, yes! she was a girl; we have never had any boys in our family."

Again, on one of those warm, bright, sunny days, which occasionally come in the fall to bless us with their sweet reminiscences of summer, and which ever tempt to summer customs and pastimes, we were out in the yard at the back of the house, Jeanie and I and two young people from over the way, playing croquet. In the midst of the game my attention was attracted by the shrill, piping whistle of an invisible mocking-bird.

"Why," said I to Jeanie, who chanced to be standing by my side, "I was not aware you had a mocking-bird; where do you keep it?"

"Ah! Mr. Bissell," replied the girl playfully, "you must not attribute all the noises in the block to our quiet, sedate domicile," and off she bounded to take her place in the game. But all the same I located the singing somewhere in the uppermost story of George Bradley's mansion.

And again we were seated one evening in

the cozy library before described; Helen rolling up tapers of blue and crimson for the mantel, Jeanie busily fashioning bright-colored worsteds into some species of fancy article, I seated in an easy-chair dividing my time between watching Helen's white fingers as they deftly twined the tissue paper, studying the contour of Jeanie's face and well-developed head as she bent over the fascinating work, and giving an occasional nod or smile of assent to an incident my host was relating, when, suddenly, upon the landing above we heard a subdued scuffling noise, as though some persons were engaging in a noiseless but desperate encounter. Mr. and Mrs. Bradley started, turned pale, exchanged glances of terrified amazement, and Mrs. Bradley immediately arose and left the room, closing the door behind her, and very soon summoned her husband to join her. They did not return for upwards of an hour, and, when they did make their appearance, made no apology for, or explanation of, their prolonged absence. And ever after the door leading to the hall was kept closed of evenings.

In the mean time six weeks had rolled by, — six blissful, happy weeks, — marked in their flight by parties, entertainments innumerable, pleasant re-unions with long-parted, well-nigh-forgotten friends, and, above all, by delightful evenings spent in the privacy of the home circle, talking over old days with Mr. and Mrs. Bradley, conversing on the general topics of the day, or playing some interesting game with the pretty Jeanie. Yes, six weeks had passed since first I had set foot in George Bradley's home, and I had no thought or idea of taking my departure yet, either. My host and hostess were very urgent that I should remain; I had severed my connection with the Liverpool firm, and had, as yet, entered into no other. I had not a relation in the world, or friend dearer than George and Helen to claim my attention, — and, withal, it was very pleasant to remain, — so why should I go? It was about this time that I was awakened one night by a terrific thunder-storm, something of an unusual occurrence at that season of the year; and while I was lying awake, listening to the low, reverberating peals, I very distinctly heard a stealthy, shuffling step descending the stairs close by, succeeded by a hideous cry, which was neither the growl of an animal, the shrill cry of a frightened bird, nor the low,

eunung laugh of a human being, but was one and all of these combined, — a terrible, unearthly cry, and one which brought the perspiration out in beads upon my forehead, and made the blood run cold in my veins. But ere I could start from my bed, and gain the door, I distinguished a strange voice speaking in low, earnest tones, followed by the soft tread of two pairs of feet up the stairs, and the careful closing of a door upon the floor above. Too excited to sleep, I raked up the smouldering ashes upon the hearth, drew forward a lounging easy-chair, and lighted a fragrant cigar. But, although I sat there for some hours, my sense of hearing actively on the alert for the least sound or for a repetition of that dreadful, uncanny cry, I heard no more of the strange creature, were it man, woman, or beast.

Well, the days flowed by joyously, delightfully, like a summer night's dream, bringing to me, on their peaceful wings, hope, joy, and a measure of happiness such as I had not experienced for years, and such as I had not expected ever to experience more. I had learned in those days to regard Helen Bradley, seeing her as I did, thus surrounded by family ties and duties, with the calm eyes of friendship rather than those of mad passion. Not that I had ceased to care for her by any means. Had I not loved her as a girl, I should have loved her for that which she was now, the purest, truest, womanliest of women. But I had assigned her a new corner of my heart, that which we are wont to devote to our tenderly remembered dead, whilst, in the place aforesaid occupied by her, Jeanie, her daughter, now reigned supreme.

Yes, I loved Jeanie Bradley; not madly, passionately, as I had loved her mother, but with an affection as pure and deep, and somewhat more tangible and practical, I fancy; and one evening fortune favored me in that Mr. and Mrs. Bradley had received an invitation to an entertainment from which their daughter and myself were excluded, — the former owing to her youth, I from non-acquaintance with the parties, — and we two were left alone. I determined within myself to improve to the full this favorable opportunity, and, after some desultory conversation, somewhat incoherent and disjointed on my part, I plunged into a full, complete account of my early love, followed by an earnest avowal of devotion

to the gentle creature before me, and a passionate entreaty that she would overlook the disparity in our ages, and become my wife.

The girl, who had flushed crimson at the beginning of my eager speech, now lifted a face blanched to an ashy pallor, as she eagerly inquired,—

“Have you spoken of this to papa and mamma?”

“No,” I cried, endeavoring to gain possession of the little hands convulsively clasped upon her lap; “but I will as soon as you grant me permission to do so.”

“Then please, please don’t!” she pleaded, “for this that you wish can never be.”

I sank upon my knees before her; yes, I, a man close upon forty, bowed the knee to this girl of nineteen, and implored her to reverse her dire decision, to at least tell me why she could not be mine; but she remained inexorable, and, having confessed her love, would confess nothing more. I started to my feet, a second time rejected, a second time bankrupt in hope and happiness, snatched her hand eagerly to my lips, and, with heavy, weary step, ascended to my room, and shut myself in with my disappointment and my sorrow.

Up and down the apartment I paced, shedding bitter tears of anguish, uttering stifled groans of despair. Up and down, back and forth, until long after all sounds in the house had been hushed for the night, until Mr. and Mrs. Bradley had returned from the scene of revelry and repaired to their apartment just opposite mine, until the clattering teams had ceased their constant roar, and no sound was heard save the measured tramp, tramp, of the night-watch as he leisurely traversed his beat, or the hurrying footsteps of some belated traveler, until the cocks were crowing in the new day, — a day of sorrow and gloom to me, no doubt; and, utterly worn out, exhausted, I was about to throw myself upon the bed to obtain a few moments’ rest, when suddenly I again heard the frightful sound, unlike any other sound in the earth or under the earth, which once before had so startled me, and which now, even in the midst of my bitter grief, made me shudder and start with a strange tremor, — followed by eager, coaxing tones, and the hurrying of many feet along the passage.

Quickly unclosing my door, I stepped out into the hall.

There were George, Helen, Jeanie, and a strange woman, whom I had not before seen; and there, crouched in a corner, one hand clutching a doll, the other a child’s picture-book, and ever and anon giving utterance to that peculiar, appalling cry before described, was a young girl of, I should judge, some twenty or twenty-one years of age, of fine stature, handsome form, but with hands and arms unnaturally long and scrawny, terminated by thick, dark nails of an extreme length. Her face was a singular combination of repulsive ugliness and the most attractive beauty. The low, retreating forehead, upon which the hair grew almost down to the bushy eyebrows, was supplemented by a pair of eyes of most beautiful, soft brown, by a nose which might have served for a sculptor’s model, and by well-rounded, downy cheeks, whose soft flush rivaled the delicate bloom of the peach; whilst the chin, retreating like the forehead, was surmounted by a mouth huge and wide, from which the under jaw dropped loosely away, disclosing great, long teeth, similar to those of an animal.

I stood staring in stupefied amazement at this wonderful creature; and when, with the nimbleness of a gazelle, she bounded away from Bradley’s grasp, touching me as she passed with her cold, clammy fingers, I started back in shuddering affright.

With a cunning alertness, most surprising to behold, she foiled our utmost endeavors to secure her; and, now bounding up one flight of stairs, now skipping down another, now gliding through the long corridors, she led us a mad chase, and at last stood close upon the edge of a steep stairway which led to the kitchen below.

Great Heavens! one false step would precipitate her to the bottom!

George cried out in excited tones, —

“Take care! Come away, quick!”

Helen sank in terror to the floor, Jeanie uttered a piercing scream of horror, and I sprang hastily forward, but too late to avoid the catastrophe.

The girl had lost her balance, — had fallen, striking each step in the fearful descent, and was lying in a motionless heap at the bottom.

How we all managed simultaneously to reach her side is a mystery, but there we all were at the self-same moment, bending over her prostrate body. She was entirely unconscious, though still breathing. George

raised her tenderly in his arms and bore her to her apartment above, whilst I went hurriedly in search of a physician.

But although everything was done for the poor girl that it was in the limits of human possibility to do, all was of no avail; her neck was broken by the fall, and she lived but a few moments, passing away without a struggle.

After a late breakfast, of which George and I partook alone, the ladies having gone to take a little rest after the excitement of the last few hours, my host drew me into his study, and, while pacing the floor with rapid strides, spoke as follows:—

"You once asked me, Fred, immediately upon your arrival, if you remember, if our other child had died, and I gave you the impression that she did. But such was not the case, my friend. She was then alive and well; it was she whom you saw last night; it is she who is at this moment lying cold and silent up-stairs.

"It was a bitter blow to my wife and I," he continued after a slight pause, "when we found out that our eldest child, our first-born, was not all right, was, in short, an idiot of the incurable kind, with a most singular, repulsive appearance; and when at the age of three years she had grown no better, but rather worse, we bent all our efforts toward the concealment of our shame. And to this end we purchased this house, fitted up a suite of rooms upon the third floor with every comfort and luxury, placed there the unfortunate child, closely guarded, kindly cared for by a faithful nurse and companion, had her death announced in the papers, even appointed a funeral,—Heaven forgive us!—and conveyed a coffin filled with stones to the cemetery, and had it carefully interred. And, for eighteen long years, the girl has remained up there on the third floor, in strict retirement, her very existence unknown outside of our own household.

"She has been supplied with every comfort, her slightest, most unreasonable wish gratified, attended with unremitting care and tenderness by her mother, and of late years by her sister as well, and, I believe, has always been perfectly happy.

"It has been this wearing grief, this hidden sorrow, this constant, harassing fear, lest our secret should be discovered, that has so aged, so saddened, my Helen and I. But, thank Heaven! the unfortu-

nate creature has now gone where concealment and secrecy are no longer necessary, and where her spirit is possessed of its rightful intelligence. Happy release! happy release!" and he turned away in tears.

A little later, as I was returning from a neighboring conservatory with a bouquet of tuberoses and camellias, I encountered Jeanie, to whom I had not addressed a word since our sad parting of the previous evening, and requested her to accompany me to the chamber of death.

She readily acceded to my request, and together we ascended to the apartments upon the third floor, rich in luxurious carpets and furniture; gay in light colors, in fresh, bright pictures, in innumerable elegant ornaments and nick-nacks, and with toys of the most elegant description scattered about in profusion, while, just outside the windows which opened to the floor, was a long veranda inclosed to the roof by a light trellis covered with trailing vines of arbutus and ivy, filled with rare plants and shrubs, in the midst of which were hung, in gilded cages, a mocking-bird and gayly plumaged canaries.

In the midst of all this luxury and beauty, lay the girl for whom it was all prepared, cold and still, her hands peacefully folded upon her silent breast, her beautiful eyes, through which never a ray of intelligence had shot, closed forever, her spirit taken flight from these trivial things below to brighter scenes above.

I placed a delicate bud in the long, thin fingers, another at the throat, and the remainder of the sweet-smelling flowers in a vase by the couch; and then stood for long, Jeanie at my side, gazing in silent thought upon the silent form before me. At last Jeanie, with the tears coursing down her cheeks, murmured, in tender, wistful accents, —

"She is happy now, poor dear, happier than she could ever have been here;" and then after a pause she added with a deep sigh, "She was a great care; no one but mamma and I know how great."

A sudden thought flashed into my mind, a sudden hope into my heart, and, turning to my companion, I said with eager haste, —

"Tell me one thing, Jeanie. If this event had occurred before I put that question to you last evening, would your answer have been different?"

"Yes, it would," was the low, tremulous answer; "but I could never have left my parents so long as they had this heavy burden to bear, — never."

Clasping the sweet girl passionately to my breast I led her from the room and down to the study, where I startled George and Helen out of their quiet grief by my vehement avowal of love and urgent entreaty for the hand of their daughter.

They gave a cordial, hearty approval of their darling's choice, and in eager triumph I bore my precious prize to the library, where, hand clasped in hand, we spent the whole of that half-happy, half-sad day, in talking of our blissful future.

That night we bore the still, cold form of the unfortunate to her last resting-place in the beautiful cemetery, and laid it close by the simple, chaste monument which had for so many years borne the words, —

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
ADELE,
ELDEST DAUGHTER OF
GEORGE R. AND HELEN M. BRADLEY.
"HE TEMPERETH THE WIND TO THE SHORN
LAMB."

Well, my story is ended. What more have I to add, indeed, unless it may be that in a few months after the events narrated, Jeanie and I were quietly united without ostentation or show; and that George and Helen, relieved of the heavy burden, the weight of care which had so grievously oppressed them, and having their daughter and myself ever near to impart comfort and cheer, regained somewhat of their old-time happy, light-hearted gayety, and that "the skeleton in the closet" became a thing of the past?

THE SQUIRE OF PENREDDON.

BY CAPTAIN HOWARD HULBERT.

CHAPTER I.

“PRAY take me to a seat, Mr. Craylock. One might as well waltz in August as in this wretchedly mild December weather; and I am not ‘in training,’ as you would term it.”

Very listlessly the words were spoken; very listlessly Belle Trevethke’s graceful gyrations were exchanged for a walking-step.

“Not in training! Why, you have not turned a hair! Do give me one more round, and we can stop opposite the conservatory. Perhaps I may have you all to myself for one minute,—and I want to ask you something.”

There was no listlessness about the speaker: on the contrary there were signs, which the cold, proud beauty could read well enough, that the man was for the moment desperately in earnest. Rhys Craylock and two thousand a year would be at those small

feet of hers when they should have carried her into a room not twenty yards distant,—a cool, seductive, dangerous room, flooded with moonbeams, as she knew, at that instant, which were playing at hide-and-seek among cunningly disposed chairs and the broad leaves of rare tropical plants.

She lifted calm, passionless eyes to his own, and a magnetic shock thrilled him. As much in love as his nature would allow was this slangy and not particularly refined Monmouthshire Squire. He coveted the possession of this rare creature, this miracle of grace, loveliness, high-bred ease. Should he gain her, he would be willing to eschew some of his carefully concealed vices, to modify his tastes and habits.

“One more round,” repeated her partner appealingly.

Belle hesitated. That scene in the conservatory which imagination so forcibly depicted was an end toward which she had

been drifting, toward which her friends had been working, for months. There were rivals in the field who would gladly have found favor in the eyes of this fortunate male impersonation of youth, shrewdness, good looks, wealth,—girls who hated her mortally, and whose small plots it had pleased her now and again to destroy by a look or a smile. In view of the manifold advantages the prospective union presented, she might have done a little more occasionally than drift toward it. Now the supreme moment had almost arrived. Her listlessness was assumed; she was stirred, triumphant,—yet for a second irresolute.

In her hesitation Belle's glance wandered round the room. For a second it rested on a man lounging in a doorway, and their eyes met. Then, with a painful flush, she made a gesture of assent, and the whirl of the waltz re-commenced. Belle's thoughts were in a whirl also.

"How dare he?" she asked herself indignantly. "How dare he look at me in that calm, supercilious way, as though I were an interesting study, and smile as though my actions verified foregone conclusions?"

In a brief space her defiant looks flashed these questions at her judge, as she passed him, leaning on Rhys Craylock's arm. His own answered with a momentary gleam of amusement, hidden as he bowed and moved aside to let them pass.

He sauntered round the room, nodding to this man or that, exchanging shots with the hangers-on of rival beauties, and lively sallies with the ladies themselves, to all appearance careless in manner. Presently a keen observer might have detected a slight contraction of the lips, one fierce flash of his eyes. Belle Trevethke and her companion were returning, and the former was drawing a glove upon a hand on which a strange ring glittered.

She was pale, and sank rather wearily into a seat, while Rhys Craylock bent over her with lover-like assiduity. Soon the music re-commenced, and a hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Pardon me, Rhys. I came to remind a fair lady of the one dance she vouchsafed me."

There was just enough emphasis on the "one" for Belle to detect it. Rhys Craylock did not; he smiled pleasantly, and moved away, feeling as though he trod on air.

"I am rather tired. Sit out the dance with me."

The tone was as curt as the sentence. Miss Trevethke's rebellious soul rose against both. Her lips parted to reply; she looked at the speaker, then held her breath and waited.

"I want to be the very first to tender my

congratulations upon your engagement to my cousin."

Belle's astonishment took precedence of her indignation.

"Who told you?" she gasped.

"Miss Trevethke's usual discrimination has doubtless deserted her in the joyous excitement of the moment. Since the secret is only five minutes old and has been imparted to no one, a little bird must have been my informant."

His manner was perfect now in finished politeness, though full of subtle irony and carefully veiled scorn. Belle winced.

"It is refreshing to meet with an exception to the old rule that 'the course of true love never did run smooth.' Once I was bold enough to try to give you a few lessons in worldly wisdom, which I deemed might have helped to so desirable a consummation. I confess my presumption in aspiring to the rôle of master."

"Have you finished, Mr. Craylock?"

"Mr. St. John Craylock, if you please. My cousin Rhys is Mr. Craylock. I like my full name from your lips always; it is a reminder that the younger branch may aspire to but few of the good things of this life. I have nearly finished, Miss Trevethke," and the speaker's voice lost its mockery.

"Let your great influence induce Rhys to conciliate the colliers. They would meet him half-way, I am sure; but, if he continues to irritate them and insult the delegates, there will be grave trouble before long with some of those gaunt, evil-looking beggars on the Penreddon estate."

"Your cousinly solicitude is touching in the extreme, Mr. St. John Craylock."

"Well, no great love is lost between Rhys and me; but I don't want the old boy to come to harm. Once or twice he has paid my debts, you know; and at rare intervals, when he is in an exceptionally good humor, I bleed him a little. Thanks to you, I hope to do so tonight."

"I think you are the most reckless, contemptible *vaurien* I have ever met."

"I admit that I am reckless and a *vaurien*—a scamp, in plain English. But contemptible? I am not contemptible in your eyes, nor even in my own. I have done no great wrong to any human being save myself."

"It is false, sir!"

There was a comical uplifting of her companion's eyebrows.

"Your fierceness takes away my breath, Miss Trevethke."

Belle's eyes blazed with anger, and she breathed in short, quick gasps.

"I hate and despise you, Mr. St. John Craylock. You describe yourself correctly as a 'scamp'; it is the title with which all the world honors you. Long ago, believing

you more sinned against than sinning, I set my girlish judgment against that of others. I knew you to be dissipated and a spend-thrift; I believed you to be a man of vicious life; but your social talents dazzled me, and your history excited my pity and furnished me with excuses. You knew all this; you read me like an open book. You tried to win my friendship; you established a kind of confidence between us, by leaping to conclusions, and expressing them, natural shrewdness directing you. Now you abuse that confidence by insulting me under the guise of congratulations upon my engagement. Your presumption has long been intolerable; here let it end. From tonight we are only most distant acquaintances."

With a frigid bow, she left him to digest this as best he might. St. John Craylock danced with many fair girls that night, but not with Belle Trevethel.

CHAPTER II.

PENREDDON was an early house, particularly in the Christmas week. Belle dismissed her maid, and was lazily weighing the rival attractions of a luxurious easy-chair and fragrant sheets, when strains of music drew her to the window. The voices of two men and two women, beautifully blending in the sweet harmony of a Welsh carol, held her spellbound.

One of the women was young; as the moonbeams fell upon her face, Miss Trevethel saw that it was sweet and girlish. By and by the singers moved away, and yet Belle stood at the window, loath to break the spell which the sad, solemn music had cast upon her.

It was a glorious night; still, peaceful. The grass and the trees were white with hoar-frost, which glittered as she gazed. Then another sight attracted her attention; a figure moving cautiously in the shadows, flitting from tree to tree, waiting, watching, listening evidently. Belle's curiosity had grown to extravagant dimensions, when she saw St. John Craylock emerge from the opposite blackness. Then the watcher ran from the trees to meet him, with a welcoming gesture, and her features, as the moonlight shone on them, were those of the Welsh singing-girl.

"Ah!" said Belle, with a long-drawn sigh.

It was a hurried interview. St. John appeared to speak with his usual languid repose, the girl with vehemence and quick afrighted glancings around. Then St. John drew forth a pocket-book, took something from it, and with a teasing motion held it in the air. It was a bank-note.

Belle saw the girl's eager eyes follow it, saw it transferred to her keeping, saw her

draw near him with a grateful, coquettish air, and say something with upraised lips,—saw St. John's laid carelessly upon them. Then Belle bowed her head, and hid burning cheeks in ice-cold hands. When she raised it, the hoar-frost glistened — that was all. She almost wondered if she had dreamed of that scene by moonlight.

The hoar-frost glistened; a faint wind rose and crept toward the tree-tops; twinkling stars peered over them; the pale moon looked down serenely; and a pale watcher looked vainly from her window for a couple who had met stealthily in the glade before it, and had disappeared whilst her head was bowed in shame for them. For Belle knew both, or rather, remembering her maid's gossip, she supplied a name for the one she did not know. By and by she laid her head on the perfumed sheets, and, like a vexed child, sobbed herself to sleep.

She must meet him, she supposed,—this St. John Craylock, of whom the world spoke harshly,—she must meet the cousin of the man to whom she was affianced; but never again should their hands be clasped in friendly greeting.

Well, what of that? What were his sins to her, that she should resent them so keenly? Why should she hate him almost? Why should she think bitter thoughts of his victim? After all, why should she, the promised bride of the Squire of Penreddon, have cheeks wet with tears, because his cousin, a man who had never been her friend even, was not immaculate.?

CHAPTER III.

A MERRY party was assembled in the breakfast-room when Belle Trevethel, somewhat later than usual, entered it on the following morning. The squire was there, holding forth to a little knot of hunting-men about a "glorious run." St. John Craylock was the centre of a laughing bevy of girls, whom he was rallying upon the flirtations of the night before. Belle's mother was deep in confabulation with her daughter's pet horror, a remotely connected and ancient countess; and the meaning glances the two cast upon her left little doubt in her mind that she was the subject of conversation. Her quick sensitiveness also detected smiles hovering upon other lips, and deduced from the fact, and from the effusion with which two or three former rivals rushed to greet her, a certainty that the secret of her engagement was no longer private property. For a moment she felt as she had sometimes imagined a newly caged bird must feel; then she was her listless, queenly self again, acknowledging with fashionable nonchalance the ardent salutation of her lover, the pretty

nothings of the women, the homage of the men.

St. John Craylock was the last to appear conscious of her presence; but he offered his hand. Belle pointedly ignored it, with a cold bow, looking him full in the face to mark the effect. There was none, apparently, save that the old amused smile began to creep about the corners of his mouth.

"I shall hate him soon!" she thought.

"Is that the footing on which I may consider myself?" he whispered.

"It is."

"Make it as little conspicuous as possible. I will aid you, to the best of my ability, by scrupulous avoidance of presumption."

"Inaugurating this avoidance of presumption by an attempt to establish a confidential understanding!" she commented scornfully.

"Indeed, you honor me too much," with a mocking bow. "I am not such a master of diplomacy."

"Then you shrink, with masculine cowardice, from the reflection on yourself that an open breach between us would imply."

"How perfect a creature would Miss Trevethke be if to her many dazzling qualities she added the trifling virtue of generosity!"

Her eyes flashed at the sarcasm. His tone changed to one of straightforward sincerity.

"Believe me, my suggestion was made to save you annoyance, not myself. Once we were almost friends, you know."

Something in the way those last words were said set Belle thinking of a plaintive little air she liked to play to herself between the lights, an air in which wailing, jarring discords revolved themselves into subtle harmonies. She turned away with an impatient gesture. Badly as she thought of this man, what was it that always rose in protest against her harsh judgment?

"Who goes to church this morning?" asked the squire, as the one cracked bell the village boasted lifted up its iron voice in reminder that it was Christmas Day. "St. John, are you coming?"

His cousin's eyes rested for an instant on Belle, as he replied, —

"You must learn the lesson of 'peace and good-will' learned from me. I am about to preach a practical sermon on the same grand theme."

"How?"

"By a judicious distribution of the money I extracted from you last night; half to my most pressing duns, half to my banker."

It was a mild and lovely morning, suggestive of early spring rather than of mid-winter. All elected to traverse on foot the mile that lay between the hall and the church, and much skillful manoeuvring was displayed in pairing off. Miss Trevethke fell to the

squire as a matter of course; and he proceeded to make himself agreeable according to his lights; but, as his conversation had but three phases, the sporting, the racing, and the bucolic, the result was not particularly satisfactory.

They had walked for about five minutes, when a stile brought them to a momentary stand-still.

"We get a good view of the Hall from here," remarked the squire. "It is a fine old pile you will be mistress of, Belle."

His companion winced as she turned to look. A little tact would have warned most men from such an allusion, had they known, as he did, how materially his position had helped to win his promised bride.

"It is very grand and beautiful," she said; but her glance dropped from the building to St. John Craylock, sauntering down the path they had come, cigar in mouth, hands in pockets, and surrounded by about a dozen dogs. All the curs on the estate knew and loved the Squire's *vaurien* cousin.

"Untruthful as well as irreligious!" was her speedy judgment.

"Bless my soul!" said the squire.

His exclamation was caused by the apparition of a gaunt, famine-stricken man, who arose from sitting upon a flat stone under the hedge, and confronted them.

"Bain't you goin' to set us on again, Squire?"

"On my terms, not yours."

"There's ne'er a collier but 'll starve first."

"Let them."

"Tim Bates's wife died last night, and the young un, o' cold and want."

"It shows what stupid fools you are, all of you."

"Starvin' men are nigh desperate, squire," said the man with rugged earnestness. "Don't go about alone at night, after dark."

Rhys Craylock laughed unmusically, and began to move on, drawing his companion's hand under his arm.

"Squire!"

"Well?"

"I never begged afore, but the young uns ha' had no breakfast, and no chance o' dinner."

Belle's fingers struggled to get loose; but their jailer held them close. With a louder laugh he answered, —

"What! subsidize the enemy? A rich idea! Come along, Belle."

The collier broke into a torrent of Welsh objurgations, the sense of which was only in part conveyed to the frightened girl by their angry tone. Looking over her shoulder at intervals, she could see him shaking his fist at them. By degrees the noise be-

came subdued by distance, then it ceased altogether. She looked again. St. John Craylock sat swinging his legs upon the stile, and dropping sundry coins into the outstretched hand of the collier, about whose legs the dogs were sniffing inquiringly. The man touched his hat gratefully, and set off at full speed toward the village. The squire was blissfully ignorant of the little scene in the rear.

"What a frightful scapegrace that cousin of mine is!" he remarked. "He bled me to the tune of a couple of hundreds last night."

"It is easy to be generous with another man's money," thought Belle; but with the thought the pungent recommendation to add the "trifling virtue of generosity" to her "many dazzling qualities" recurred, and she flushed hotly.

The sermon was long and prosy. After a vain struggle to concentrate her attention upon it, Belle let her thoughts roam. Well, her future was decided now,—no more anxious thoughts about the coming years, no more ambitious dreams, no more restless girlish longings for the love of which poets sing, the wine of life. Ambition! As the wife of the squire of Penreddon, she would take a proud position in the county, and her settlements would be handsome. Love! She would be beloved, to the best of his ability, by her spouse; and she would make as honest a return as possible. He was young, tolerably good-looking, one who might find favor in many women's sight. It was unfortunate that they had so few tastes and sympathies in common; but that was better than to be in constant companionship with a man like St. John Craylock, gifted with such remarkable intuition that one's most secret feelings were often read at a glance, and made the subject of merciless comment.

Was this intuition the tie that had drawn them together so often, that forbade the exchange of commonplaces, that in times gone by had made them almost friends, that now threatened to render them life enemies? In any case it could not warrant the tone she had so often found objectionable; it could not justify the insulting strictures upon actions, motives, desires, that had time after time aroused her indignation. No; he would be in a manner her cousin, and a certain form of cold friendliness must be kept up, but she would hold him at arm's length. She must not be betrayed into discussions in which she was invariably worsted, and which showed her quick, passionate, resentful spirit at the worst. Not that she cared for his opinion of her. A man who stood so low in her estimation—

There was a general uprising, and the words of the benediction fell upon her ears.

The service was over, and the people began to troop out.

She looked round the church. A few pews behind, on the other side, a young girl was just rising from her knees. She had a sweet, serene face, with an expression of saint-like purity hovering about it. It was the Welsh carol-singer to whom St. John Craylock had given a bank-note on the previous night! Belle was a dull companion on the way home; she felt perplexed and worried.

"Come and see my blood-hound," said the squire. "Here—Nero, Nero!"

Nero advanced to the end of his chain, and glanced at them distrustfully. The squire bent to pat him; Nero resented the familiarity by a display of white teeth and a low growl like distant thunder.

"Strange!" said the squire. "I am that brute's master, as he knows very well; but see how he recognizes the fact. He behaves in the same amiable manner toward everybody, save St. John. We dare not unchain him. When he was an overgrown pup, he decided to bite St. John one day, and my cousin caught him by the ear and gave him the soundest thrashing he ever had in his life. Since then the dog has worshiped the very ground he treads on. Sometimes St. John takes him for a walk, and chains him up afterward. No one else can do the latter."

"Let us go in," suggested Belle; and they entered the house.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was the middle of January, and quite a family party occupied Penreddon,—Mrs. Trevethick, Belle, the ancient countess, St. John, the squire, and two or three guests beside; the others had departed.

"How do you propose to amuse yourselves this morning, ladies?" said the squire.

"What is the temperature?" asked Belle.

"Does that affect the question?"

"As far as I am personally concerned. I have been waiting since Christmas for a mild day on which to sketch the summer-house on the islet."

"Well, it is warm enough today, in all conscience. May I carry your camp-stool and drawing materials, and make myself generally useful?"

"Distract my attention, that is to say, and venture impertinent criticisms on an unfinished work. Certainly not; I go and return alone, and forbid everybody to approach me."

"I have letters to write," said Mrs. Trevethick.

"And I a novel to finish," remarked the countess.

"Then what do you say to an hour's shooting, St. John?"

"As you will, Rhys. We can kill time, if nothing else," drawled his cousin languidly.

The islet was about half a mile from the Hall, and lay in the centre of an artificial lake, which in its turn was surrounded by a small park bordered on every hand by plantations. In summer it was a most charming retreat, easy of access by means of a little boat fastened to the shore. Through the winter months this frail bark was kept safe under lock and key in the boat-house.

The principal subject of Belle's contemplated sketch was a summer-house built to represent a Grecian temple. She had long before selected the position on the shore which commanded it and the islet most advantageously; and, with a light heart, she set forth after breakfast, declining all offers of escort, at the same instant that the gentlemen started in another direction upon a shooting expedition.

Belle's path lay through woods and copses, and was intersected by numberless romantic byways, some of which she found so attractive at times that she rambled a little. It was quite an hour before she reached the scene of operations, but that was immaterial. She speedily became engrossed in her work,—so deeply so that when, after a time, the deep baying of a hound fell upon her ear, she gave no heed to it. She was conscious of the sound,—conscious that it was distant at first, and then gradually drawing nearer and nearer,—that was all.

Presently she heard light swift steps behind her, as of some one running upon the green turf; but just then she was finishing a delicate curve, and did not turn her head. When she did so it was to see St. John Craylock, breathless, excited, stop by her side, and throw down his gun upon the grass.

"Do not be frightened," he said.

Before she could scornfully repudiate any such intention, he raised her bodily in his arms, rushed to the lake, and began to wade through the water toward the islet, without a word of explanation. Amazement, anger, indignation,—half a dozen different emotions,—were crowded into a brief second; but anger was predominant. How lightly must he hold her to venture thus upon a practical joke of the very worst and most unpardonable character! In the blind rage with which this thought inspired her, she raised herself and struck him with her open hand across the face. He could not protect himself. By this time the water had reached his waist, and with strong arms he was holding her above it. With all her force, increased by passion, she struck him once, twice, thrice! Then she desisted,—for he

showed no signs of flinching, or, indeed, of feeling—and, woman-like, burst into tears.

They had reached the shore, now. He set her upon her feet gravely, quietly, tenderly.

"Go into the summer-house," he said. "Unseen, you can watch from the window until I fetch you. There will be people on the opposite bank in a few seconds, and it will be pleasanter for you that they should not know of this incident."

There was a ring of authority in his voice which she did not dare to disobey. He was in the water again, wading hurriedly to the opposite shore. He reached it, and ran to his gun. As he lifted it from the ground, a blood-hound burst from the plantation, pursued by a few laborers, armed with various weapons. The animal's nose was to the ground, following the scent of some one, its tongue lolling out, its mouth covered with foam.

"Stand back, all of you!" shouted St. John.

The blood-hound no sooner caught sight of the water than it left the scent and turned sharply at right angles. Belle saw St. John's gun brought to his shoulder,—saw the flash, and that the hound turned a kind of somersault.

"Another barrel, to make sure work," said his destroyer; and a second report followed.

A knot of men gathered round the prostrate dog.

"Poor old Nero!" said St. John. "To think he should go mad in January! But hydrophobia is confined less to the dog-days than most people imagine. Take him away, some of you, and bury him. I am going off again with my gun; and with long strides he began to skirt the lake.

The unseen watcher turned away, and, in a passion of grief and self-reproach, sank upon the floor of the summer-house. Sooner or later, when the men were gone, he would return and fetch her. What a brave, noble fellow he was, in spite of the faults she had ever been ready to descry and magnify! How calm and patient he always was beneath her scorn, her harsh judgments, her bitter words! How gently forbearing he had been in this last scene, when in the very act of saving her life, evil had been basely returned for good.

"Belle!"

It was St. John Craylock's voice, kind and pitiful. He had waded through the water as soon as the islet had hidden him from the group around the dead blood-hound.

He had forgiven her, then, or he would have addressed her as "Miss Trevethek." Never before had he used her Christian

name alone. It was a kind and considerate way of showing there was peace between them. Belle's sobs grew louder with the thought, and she hid a little tear-stained face in her hands. In sore perplexity St. John looked on for an instant; then he stooped, lifted her tenderly, and marched into the lake. Belle's face fell upon his shoulder. She would have given worlds for the power to articulate "Forgive me," but a great knot in her throat prevented all utterance. He set her down with a great assumption of cheerfulness.

"We shall be late for luncheon, Miss Trevethk. Run round and get your sketching materials. I dare not offer to fetch them, for I must be quick in changing these wet clothes."

But for some reason he did not put in an appearance at luncheon, and was invisible all the afternoon. A re-action seized upon Belle's spirits, and when they met at the dinner-table she was her gay, animated self again, even more brilliant than usual. St. John noted the fact with a sigh of relief, as he dexterously contrived to place himself with the right cheek toward her. He was even more carefully dressed than usual, a circumstance the squire was not slow to remark and to make a subject of open comment.

"I say, St. John, you are tremendously got up."

"My dear fellow, I am one of those unfortunate genteel paupers who cannot afford to wear a shabby coat."

"But you have actually powdered your face, man."

"I beseech you, Rhys, spare my blushes!" cried his cousin with affected bashfulness.

"Perhaps you intend to hold forth at the meeting of the colliers tonight!"

"I have not matriculated in stump oratory; and I did not know of any meeting. Where is it to be held?"

"At my park gates. The beggars call it a demonstration; and I verily believe they feel inclined for a little terrorism."

"Do you know, Rhys, I fear you may one day repent your harshness to those poor wretches? Starving men are desperate men, with warped ideas of justice."

Dinner was over. The ladies had retired. Rhys Craylock and his cousin were sleepily sipping their wine, and meditating an adjournment to the drawing-room, when one of the stable-boys appeared, pushing unceremoniously past the portly butler, much to that worthy's indignant astonishment.

"What is it, Mike?"

The lad stood panting and breathless; he had evidently come as fast as his legs would carry him.

"The colliers, sir—they be—coomin'

up to the Hall—in a body, sir! They say—better be hanged—than starved! They be terrible mad, sir,—all on 'em. Some talk o' settin' fire to the Hall! One man begged 'em to stop where they were, or there'd be murder done; and one of them smooth-tongued fellers—dallagates—up and said, 'Not murder, men—justifiable hommy—hommy somethin'.' And they all hoorayed, and they be coomin' as fast as one o'clock!"

"A set of drunken scamps!" said the squire blusteringly, rising; but his voice trembled, and his face was of a deadly pallor.

St. John looked at him, then arose and pulled a bell sharply.

"Mike," he said to the lad, "you can ride barebacked, I know; I caught you at it the other day, racing round and round a field without orders. Take Brown Bess and ride for your life to Milford. Part of a Dragoon regiment is quartered there for the night. See the officer in command, and bring them up in my name; I know him. It is only two miles; a five-pound note if they are here in half an hour."

The boy vanished, and St. John turned to the butler, who answered the bell.

"Are all the shutters closed, Wilcox?"

"They are, sir."

"Go round the house to make sure. Bolt and bar all doors, save the great one in the hall, to which we will attend. Have our breech-loaders and every fire-arm in the house brought here; and let all the servants assemble in the hall."

The butler, too well trained to express surprise at commands issued in a tone so quietly authoritative, withdrew, and the cousins were left alone.

"Let us go outside and listen, Rhys."

It was a clear, starlit night. No wind was stirring; the tramp of approaching feet and the confused murmur of many voices were distinctly audible. In five minutes, or less, a crowd of infuriated men would be assembled in that open space, and who could say what might follow?

"Rhys!"

"Yes."

"Will you give in?"

"Not a bit of it."

"They will break every window in the place."

"Let them."

"We may have to fight."

"Gentlemen are a match for colliers, any day."

"Well, the great thing will be to temporize till the soldiers come."

"You are the best judge, St. John. I will obey orders."

"Then go up-stairs and prepare the ladies. I will talk to the servants."

They re-entered. There were five men and nine women in the hall, a curious and excited group. St. John attended carefully to the fastenings of the door; then he turned to the domestics.

"I am told," he said quietly, "that a mob of colliers, inflamed with drink and speechifying, are coming here to demand what they call justice from the Squire of Penreiddon. There are soldiers within two miles, and I have reason to hope they will shortly arrive to quell the riot."

One of the maids, an Irish woman, began loud lamentation.

"Oh, murther, murther! Sure it's kilt intirely" —

"Biddy," exclaimed St. John sternly, "if you make that noise, I will have you put out-of-doors to face them alone!"

Biddy's cries ceased instantly.

"If any woman screams or makes the slightest noise, she shall be dismissed to-morrow. You may join the ladies on the floor above, and remain there."

He pointed to the stair-case, and the women trooped away. St. John looked inquiringly at the men.

"Are you frightened? It may be serious business. Any one who is afraid to fight is at liberty to go up-stairs with the women."

"I b'ain't afraid," said one man sturdily.

"I — I am a member of the Peace Society, sir," gasped the butler.

"You had better take care of the women, Wilcox."

The butler retired, trembling in every limb; the others elected to remain.

"Very good. Here is a gun for each of you: load, but do not fire unless I give the word."

On either side the hall door a narrow strip of figured glass ran to within a few feet of the floor. St. John lowered the lights until they were nearly extinguished, and took an observation through the figured glass, motioning his cousin to do likewise. At the same instant the rustle of a dress caught his ear.

"Who is there?" he cried sharply.

"It is I," said Miss Trevethick calmly. "Do not send me away, please. I have no fear, and I may be of service."

CHAPTER V.

HERE they are, St. John!"

"I see them."

From out the dark shadows of the trees poured a crowd of men with savage, excited faces. There was no noise, — the gesticulations only were violent. Two or three of the mob, leaders apparently, pointed occasionally to doors and windows, and were doubtless devising a scheme of opera-

tions. Then one approached the great door, and gave an unassuming double-knock.

"Crafty beggars!" muttered the squire.

There was a minute of silence; then the knock was repeated. Another short interval, and a whispered consultation; then a violent ringing of the hall bell, and another pause.

"That is right," said the squire. "Knock and ring, ring and knock, for the next half-hour if you like. Penreiddon does not open its doors to admit such gentry."

The crowd began to sway backward and forward, and the stillness of the night was broken by the confused murmur of vehement voices.

"There will be a rush, next," said St. John.

Almost with the words there came a rush. The solid wood trembled, and the iron bolts rattled, as several strong men hurled themselves against the great door; but they might as well have tried to beat down a stone wall.

"Try again, lads," said the squire.

"It is a perfectly harmless amusement," rejoined his cousin. "They might play all night at that game, and never win it."

The colliers were evidently of the same opinion; a yell of baffled rage and curses both loud and deep bespoke the fact.

"Hollo! What is this?"

"This" was a long, heavy, strongly built ladder. Willing hands raised it quickly and placed it against one after another of the upper windows; but those on the second floor were securely guarded by strong shutters, and beyond them it would not reach.

"Foiled again. What next?"

"I wonder they do not break the windows," said the squire.

"They have no stones. They are upon grass; there are no stones near."

A minute's breathless suspense, then a sharp exclamation from St. John.

"What mischief is brewing now?" inquired the squire.

About twenty men were ranging themselves at regular distances on either side of the ladder, grasping it under their armpits.

"An impromptu battering-ram, — that is all. Now for our last chance. James, give me the largest walking-stick from the rack. Quick!"

The battering-ram was in position half a dozen yards from the door, its propellers awaiting only the signal for action, when St. John struck the strip of figured glass, through which he had hitherto reconnoitred proceedings, with all his force, shivering it from top to bottom.

The startled colliers suspended operations.

"Why, men," said St. John with calm

dignity, "you are on the point of committing one of the gravest offences against the law!"

"Curse the law!" cried one of the ring-leaders savagely. "We are the law now,—lynch-law,—and we'll see justice done!"

"What do you want?"

"Revenge!"

"The greatest villian unhung,—Rhys Craylock!"

"The man has starved my wife to death!"

"And my young uns!"

"And all on us a'most!"

"Make ready, boys! We'll stave in the door!"

"Stop!" shouted St. John. "If you want the squire to come out and speak with you, withdraw a little. Leave twenty yards clear around the door, and we will unfasten it."

"Are you mad, St. John?" exclaimed his cousin. "I dare not go out to those ruffians; my life would not be worth a moment's purchase! There are a lot of those poaching scamps amongst them, with guns!"

"It is a ruse to gain time. At the last moment I will go out to them."

"Well, they have no personal animosity against you."

In the almost darkness a soft little palm groped for St. John's hand, and found it.

"Do not go," whispered Miss Trevethek. "They will kill you."

"I trust not; but if I stay here they will kill your lover, and perhaps all of us," he replied.

During this brief colloquy a consultation had been held outside, the result of which was the falling back of the crowd the stipulated distance, urged thereto, in low tones, by the leaders.

"Those whisperings mean treachery," commented St. John.

"I will go out to them!" exclaimed Miss Trevethek. "No British mob is vile enough to hurt a woman."

"You will stay where you are," returned St. John sharply, "or retire to your proper post, the head of the stair-case."

"Now, then, look sharp!" shouted a collier; "we've kep' our part o' the bargain,—stick to yours!"

"Your yards are precious short ones, however," replied St. John; "fall back a little farther."

A loud murmuring arose.

"James!"

"Yes, sir."

"Undo the fastenings of the door. The instant I pass out, replace all the bolts."

Belle's hands clasped St. John's arm.

"Do not go; I implore you by all you hold dear!"—

"No more nonsense now!" cried a voice

from the crowd. "We give you three minutes!"

St. John's reply was to step into the night. As he did so, a gust of wind brought the sound of many horses' hoofs. He would have retreated, but his instructions had been followed. The colliers heard the sound also.

"The sojers!" screamed one.

Rhys Craylock, watching from his strip of unbroken glass all that had passed, screamed in unison,—

"Great Heavens, they are going to fire!"

Almost as he spoke several guns were fired. Agitated by the commotion raised by the cry of "Soldiers!" deceived probably, in the dim light, by the resemblance between St. John's commanding figure and that of the squire, fearful that at the supreme moment their prey should escape them, some of the poachers discharged their weapons.

Rhys Craylock sank to the floor, without even a groan,—dead. A charge of shot had gone just one yard wide of its mark.

"Light, light!" shrieked Miss Trevethek, essaying with trembling fingers to withdraw the bolts James had just fastened so carefully.

Somebody turned on the lamps. Two of the servants had raised the head of the fallen squire, and were feeling for his heart.

"Miss, miss,—he is dead!"

Not hearing or not heeding, Belle threw open the door, and a stream of light fell upon the entrance. St. John Craylock lay there, blood oozing from his side. With supernatural strength Belle lifted and drew him into the hall, part of her dress brushing his face as she did so. It was of deadly pallor; but upon one cheek was the livid imprint of four little fingers, marks that had kept the bearer from the luncheon-table, and that he afterward contrived, in consideration for her, to hide with powder.

Men in uniform reined up before the hall. The crowd of colliers had melted away like chaff before the wind. An officer stood in the doorway, bowing, cap in hand, to a lady whose tears were dropping, in a blind passion of grief, on the white upturned face of a bleeding man.

"My darling! my darling!" he heard her moan; and, being an officer and a gentleman, he gave place to the regimental surgeon, who had fortunately accompanied him, and moved beyond earshot.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was just midnight. The clock in the hall announced the hour to a young girl who crouched on a mat by the study door. The door opened, and two gentlemen appeared. The girl rose instantly to her feet, looking

in mute appeal from one brave, kindly face to the other.

One of the gentlemen took her cold hands in his sympathetically, and drew her into the room. He was the regimental doctor. He had daughters of his own, and he thought of them as he averted his face a little that his eyes might not meet Belle's imploring ones, or reveal the truth to them.

"Oh, tell me!" she cried. "Pray tell me quickly!"

"Child, he is in Heaven's hands, not ours."

The beseeching face quivered with pain. "Will he die?"

"We cannot say. I believe we have extracted all the shot, and, if so, the irritation may not be excessive. Your lover has a magnificent constitution, Miss Trevethk. With perfect quiet and good nursing, he may pull through."

"Your lover!" Belle recollected the position in which the regimental doctor had found her. But she was too grief-stricken to blush at the mistake.

"I—I will nurse him myself"—

"Pardon me, that would be fatal. You must not go near him on any consideration. Dr. Cooper has sent for a woman whom he recommends as the most efficient nurse, in spite of her youth, he has ever known."

As he spoke, the nurse entered. It was the Welsh carol-singer; the girl whose sweet, saint-like face had seemed in church to reproach Miss Trevethk for unjust suspicions. Belle was changed now; strangely humble and gentle in her grief. The appearance of the nurse brought but one sharp pang; why was she allowed the privilege of ministering to the dying man? why was Belle denied it? She approached the girl.

"His life is in your hands," she whispered.

"Miss, I would give my life for him! He was the truest friend that ever a poor tempted girl had."

Hours, days, crept slowly by. There was a stately funeral: the Squire of Penreddon was borne to his last, long home. A new squire lay in the shadowy borderland between life and death; and many a rough prayer for his recovery parted the lips of *tenantry and collier-folk*. St. John Craylock was always popular. Two women at the Hall prayed also. The one was gentle, the other simple; but a great friendship united them. They both loved this man; to both he was a hero. Each loved without hope, unselfishly. Perhaps that was the secret of their regard for each other.

They talked of him sometimes with hushed voices, while he slept. They talked of the dead too, solemnly, mercifully: but one told how he secretly sought her love, and failed to win it; how he might yet have

robbed her of a woman's dearest attribute, through her filial affection, had not St. John Craylock, by a timely gift of money, enabled her to pay long arrears of rent.

The guests had all departed, all save Mrs. Trevethk and Belle. The former would have gone likewise, had not Belle absolutely declined. There was the ghost of the old queenliness in the way she carried her point; in all other respects she was oddly changed.

Dr. Cooper's orders were imperative; she must not enter the sick-room. Obedient, Belle contented herself with hovering about the door, save that once in the day, when St. John slept most soundly, nurse called her, and she brought fresh flowers, snow-drops, fragrant violets, and placed them near him.

On one of these occasions the sick man's eyes opened a little, and he watched her drowsily beneath half-shut eyelids. The next moment he dozed again; and the nurse thought what a happy smile the white lips wore.

Arrayed in warm shawls, and a gorgeous dressing-gown, St. John has been carried from the sick-room to another, for an hour only. The temperature is regulated to half a degree. Dr. Cooper is as despotic as ever, and forbids the excitement of an interview. Belle pouts with a little of her old willfulness, and submits. But, when the nurse comes to say that her patient is "sleeping beautiful," Miss Trevethk makes a petition.

"Oh, let me sit by him, dearie, just five minutes!" I will keep behind his sofa; and, if he wakes, he will not see me, and will think it is you. Five minutes in the air will do you so much good," adds crafty Belle.

Nurse smiles and acquiesces. As quietly as a little mouse her substitute steals across the room, and seats herself. An amused smile plays for a moment about St. John's lips, then disappears.

"Belle!"—softly. There is no response.

"Belle!"—more firmly. Belle hesitates.

"Belle!"

"Yes."

"Come here!"

Belle rises, and stands with downcast eyes before the autocrat on the sofa.

"I cannot see you. Kneel—upon the rug."

Obedient, Belle follows instructions. A vision of Dr. Cooper's horrified amazement rises before her guilty imagination.

"Look at me, child."

Their faces are level now. There is a momentary uplifting of the dark lashes. They sink again. A faint tinge of color appears on either cheek.

"Belle!"

She glances at him again.

"Throw your arms about my neck, and kiss me."

She is crimson now, a vivid rose-color flooding cheek, neck, brow.

"Kiss me, darling! How dare you thwart a sick man?"

And she obeys. Nurse opens the door

softly, and as softly closes it. Neither sees her.

"Love, dear love, will you be Penreddon's mistress, after all?"

"I will be your true and loving wife, St John."

And, in early summer, merry bells proclaim aloud that Belle Trevethk has wedded the Squire of Penreddon.